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## *The Mischief of Monica.*

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### CHAPTER XXII.

#### AN UNKIND MOMENT.

Forever, Fortune, wilt thou prove  
An unrelenting foe to love ;  
And, when we meet a mutual heart  
Come in between and bid us part ?—THOMSON.

‘SO I thought I would just give you the hint, Monica.’ With these words Mr. Joseph Schofield concluded the interview recorded in the last chapter.

Who had given *him* the hint ?

That he had had a tolerably broad one was plain to the densest vision ; that he had hurried home hot-foot in case young Dorrien should be there before him was the explanation which made all the day’s proceeding clear.

But why had he considered such haste necessary ? He had known, for no one had ever concealed it from him, that there had been comings and goings—almost daily comings and goings—between his house and Dorrien’s house ; that his nieces had lunched and called at Cullingdon, and that Lady Dorrien’s high-swung and old-fashioned barouche—a relic of better times—had been seen now and again at his own door. Perhaps he had not been told quite all the number of occasions on which a solitary rider had found his way alone thither, on some trifling pretext

scarce worthy the name of an excuse, but he had known enough to have made further knowledge a matter of course.

Up to the present hour he had, however, given no sign, and it was this silence which led Monica to conclude he intended to give none. Passive consent, not active assistance, would be the utmost either sister might reasonably expect in the event of suitors arising.

'For once her shrewd foresight had been at fault. Bred in an atmosphere of calculating selfishness, she had drunk in suspicion and distrust with every breath. 'You see, my dear Bell,' Prudence was wont to observe, 'it is easy to be pleasant. Almost everybody can be pleasant who tries. Of course people are often shamefully rude; and as for some of aunt Fanny's friends, they were perfectly atrocious to each other; but girls of our age are sweeter tempered. Only don't expect anything more of them. I do not know a single human being who would give up a fancy, or sacrifice a pleasure, to save either you or me from perishing;' which was, perhaps, rather a strong mode of expression, and a sweeping condemnation; but it expressed the habitual view with which her own observation, joined to Colonel Lavenham's teaching, had taught this young girl to regard the world she lived in.

Plunged from that world into another, she naturally measured the inhabitants of the latter by the standard of the former. Her new guardian had been generosity and beneficence itself; he had outstripped in kind consideration every other relation with whom the sisters had ever had to do; he had not only provided for their wants, he had created wants on their behalf; nothing they had desired of him but was supplied instantly, willingly, and, as it seemed, with pleasure at being so entreated. Their trifling attentions, their most ordinary deference to his wishes (Colonel Lavenham had been solicitous to impress on both that such deference was imperative), all of this seemed to good Joseph gratuitous on their part. It inspired him with new affection; and accordingly 'He is really fond of us,' quoth Monica, in some of her sisterly conferences. 'He is. I am sure I don't know why: it must be his own goodness which makes him look on us in the light he does.'

'Oh, I don't know,' rejoined Isabel, one day. It seemed to her that they had not quite come to that. 'Some people may like us—a little,' she added, not seeing the force of such extreme humility.

'Of course they *may*, but they never *do*,' replied Monica, who

was in one of her moods. 'We are not the kind that are liked. We are admired, adored, envied, hated—we might be loved—' she paused.

'Might be loved! I should think we might!' resentful indignation in the other's voice.

'But yet we never have been so,' continued Monica, steadily. 'And I can tell you why: it is because we, on our part, have never learned to love. I think I could love—'

—'Uncle Schofield?'

'Uncle Schofield. It is not only for what he is to us, and what he does for us. I could love him—I do already love him for what he is *in himself*. Bell, I think I shall begin to look out for people who in themselves are good and true. I believe there are some such people to be found. Uncle Schofield is one; he is my first; that makes a beginning; now let us see who will be the next.'

But, all the same, it would not do to let her imagination carry her too far; and when Mr. Dorrien began to usurp a great deal more of her thoughts and day dreams than he had any right to do, Monica simply allowed him a little extra latitude, whether absent or present in the flesh, because of the seeming impossibility of the present leading to anything further in the future. It was rather nice to sit, and look, and listen, and linger, and yield herself to unrecognised love-making which would have to be dashed to pieces if once recognised; the very thread upon which it hung lent to it a charm. Its uncertainty, its unlawfulness, and its apparent hopelessness combined to invest it with a sort of glamour. She had not been at all convinced that she wanted Dorrien, but she had been perfectly aware that she could not have him.

Now she was told in a few distinct words that she could have him.

He, and none other, had been meant by her uncle's imaginary suitor; and even Daisy's renunciation, couched, as it had been, in thought and speech which would not have soiled an angel's wing, had not, in point of fact, opened the door, as Mr. Schofield's more practical assurances had done.

Are our readers curious to know what had stirred up the good uncle? A little bit of malice, the malice of a little bit of a mind. Miss Ethel Carnforth, it may be remembered, had been set on the watch by the heedlessness of an imprudent guest, who ran all risks for the sake of an hour or two in Paradise. In the neglected

Ethel's bosom anger raged. Moreover, she fancied that her own partner, slighted in his turn by her, was beholding with vengeful glee her discomfited and desolate condition from his own obscurity. He could see that she was perforce silent during the whole, or nearly the whole, of the meal; and this was the last drop in her cup of mortification.

Afterwards she had sought out the young man, and thus addressed him: 'We are a good-natured family, are we not, Mr. Smith? Of course you see why Mr. Dorrien and Miss Lavenham have been asked here together. But I was unlucky in being placed next him, and Mr. Wilkins was unlucky in being next her. We had each to endure in silence. One should always do as one would be done by, however; and we shall be able to say that the match was made up at our house.'

'Oh, indeed!' said young Smith, accepting the overture.

Then he went home and tattled. Papa Smith went up in the train next morning with Joseph Schofield. The two put their heads together. Subsequently Mr. Schofield considered that his little touch of dizziness, and the ringing in his ears whereof he complained to his friend the chemist, were almost an intervention on the part of Providence to give him an excuse for getting home before any more had been heard of Dorrien. It had leaked out at breakfast that Dorrien was coming in the afternoon, and he now thought he knew what the young man was coming for.

About the middle of the afternoon Harry came, fresh, it will be remembered, from his confidential interview with Captain Alverstoke.

Archie had been in his way a friend. He had given good advice, and he had offered a handsome loan. It had been a morning of surprises to all the principal persons concerned in our little story, not the least of these being that which Dorrien had received on being voluntarily offered aid which he had never dreamed of asking. Alverstoke was wealthy; but wealthy men are not more eager to lend money than are their poorer neighbours; and perhaps, to tell the truth, at another time no such offer might have been contemplated.

But it chanced that Captain Alverstoke was especially 'flush'; moreover, that he had a soft corner in his heart. He had once been in love—deeply and truly in love—and the affair had not prospered. It had left him a bachelor—a jolly, open-hearted, easy going, and on the whole well-contented bachelor; but it had left him also one faint, faded gleam of heaven opened. He had

seen a reflex of that gleam on Dorrien's brow on the previous evening ; it had roused an old, old feeling within ; it had stirred a storehouse of dim sensations ; and in the night he had dreamed a dream.

The confidence of the following morning, and the self-betrayal into which Dorrien had been beguiled, further worked upon his tender mood. He felt an ineffable pity for this poor fellow whom a few thousands would save.

It seemed a shame.

It had ended in this. If Dorrien could square up other matters, could win his love and her uncle's money, Alverstoke would advance enough to set him free of debt, and could be repaid at leisure.

Dorrien had felt as if prison bars were falling apart before his eyes. I fear he did not think much about Daisy Schofield ; he shared Monica's opinion on that subject ; add to which, the hope, the tangible, reasonable hope of actually possessing his soul's mistress rendered him indifferent towards every other consideration. About Monica herself he could not feel any real anxiety. She had, it must be owned, given him but little cause for it : and he was hardly to blame if he felt that it was only coming to an understanding with his father, and all was his own. He had been so jubilant, so grateful, so incoherent and wild, so perfectly and radiantly happy, that the friendly Alverstoke had been half sad in the midst of his generosity, half envious of the joy he had himself occasioned.

Then Sir Arthur had been sought out and informed with some confusion, but with clearness upon the only points he really cared about, of the change between his prospective daughters-in-law. He had looked a little crestfallen at first, but as of late he had been taken up rather shortly upon the subject, and had been sharply informed that matters were not so ripe as he thought, with more of the kind, he was so overjoyed to find that the time for action had arrived, even though it were to be action in a different direction from that which had been anticipated, that he was ready again with his 'God bless you, my boy, go in and win,' and with his cogitations as to how much of the Schofield money could be made to flow out over the Dorrien land, the moment his son's views were fully placed before him.

All thus arranged, Dorrien with a light heart galloped westward, and the red sun shone into his eyes as he turned in at the gates of Flodden Hall.

He looked eagerly about, but Monica was nowhere to be seen.

She had been out since daybreak, and had passed through strange vicissitudes of feeling during the intermediate hours. In consequence, she was by this time tired both bodily and mentally, and had gone within doors and settled herself in the drawing-room, where a blaze sparkling at one extremity and September sunlight illuminating the other, combined to make all as cheerful and attractive as heart could desire. Isabel was also there.

‘Shall I stay?’ the latter had inquired, and been told she was certainly to stay. ‘Unless—unless—’ Monica had faltered and blushed a little. ‘I hardly think—I don’t expect—I don’t wish to be alone,—that is to say, I would not for the world prepare to be alone,—I—’

‘Oh, I understand.’ A smile on the speaker’s lips.

‘But pray, *pray* be careful,’ Monica had whispered in an agony, as a glimpse of an approaching horseman warned her that another great moment of her life was approaching. ‘Don’t go, Bell; dear Bell, *don’t* go. I don’t think you must go at all. No, Bell, don’t go at all. Recollect,’ in a tremulous whisper as the door-bell pealed, ‘not *at all*,—unless—’

‘Unless,’ whispered Bell back, with a kiss. ‘Oh, I know what that “Unless” means.’

She was charmed to see the alteration in Monica. Enough had been told her—though in vague terms, and with many warnings—to make her understand something of what was going on; and now, if her sister could only become Lady Dorrien in prospect, and spend most of her time at Cullingdon, and have a town house, and—and—Monica had implored her to be silent.

Monica’s feeling was, that even with all that had been done to smooth her path, it was still, and ought still to be, beset with thorns. She could not bear to see Bell triumphant and joyous; her uncle’s decorous satisfaction was a prick to her conscience; and she scarcely knew whether she ought not even at this hour to deny and defy Dorrien. She was shaking with agitation as he entered the room.

Happily for him, Dorrien never was one to offend at such a moment. He had intuitive perceptions which were never at fault; add to which he had at the present juncture his own soul-absorbing passion to render him serious in the presence of her who induced it. It was never with Monica that he laughed and sang. At an earlier period of their intercourse he might have done so, but then his spirits had been weighted by another consciousness; and though subsequently this oppression had been

thrust aside, it had only given place to new and not less overmastering emotions.

It was, therefore, with scarcely any disturbance that the little party re-seated themselves on the entrance of the new-comer, and tea was handed to the rest by Isabel.

Monica sat in a broad, low armchair by the fire, the rosy flush of the autumnal sun just tipping her head as she leaned it against the cushion, and falling in a streak over the pretty dress whose warm tints her uncle had admired. She owned to being fatigued ; she had had a morning ride and an afternoon walk ; and then Mr. Schofield's early return was descended upon, and the cause, the ostensible cause explained.

'He has gone down to the station now,' said Monica. 'He said he should go down to meet some friend who comes out by this five-o'clock train, who will bring his letters, and also take in word that he is not going to his office to-morrow morning. You see how clever we have become, Mr. Dorrien. We know all about our uncle's doings now, and are quite habituated to his going in every day after breakfast, and coming out before dinner. It would really seem strange to have no fresh arrival at dinner-time ; no one to expect at six o'clock, bringing out odds and ends and parcels. Uncle Schofield brings out all sorts of parcels. Whatever Bell and I want from Liverpool we ask him to bring. He never minds. He goes and shops for us, and shops a great deal better than we ourselves should do. And he brings us such presents ! If he can think of nothing else, he brings chocolate and French bonbons. Look at that box by you. But the other day he produced a parcel, and what should it contain but strips of the most magnificent embroidery ! It was lovely, and in such good taste too. We shall feel quite at a loss during this week, when six o'clock comes and brings with it no *fresh* uncle Schofield, only the uncle Schofield we have had all day,' and she laughed a little ; then suddenly, and, it seemed to Dorrien, with infinite grace and sweetness added, 'but even the uncle Schofield we have all day is an uncle Schofield to love with one's whole heart.'

'I wish I could be sure he would be an uncle for *me* to love with *my* whole heart,' thought he, to himself ; but Alverstoke's unlooked-for generosity made all things seem possible, and he felt that at any rate he should not approach Mr. Schofield hampered with debt as well as with poverty.

Accordingly he listened thoughtfully, and looked appreciatively.

Monica bade him pile up the logs upon the fire. The sisters had praised Mrs. Carnforth's blazing timber, and their uncle had had some brought to his door within a few hours. The station master had sent it up. Though not roughly sawn and severed, it was hissing, steaming, fragrant smelling, and had a compactness and neatness which made amends for size. Dorrien, who from being accustomed to such things never noticed them, merely observed that the firelight danced on Monica's gown as soon as the sunlight had departed, quenched in a sudden cloud.

He knelt in front of the blaze, thoughtfully; the billets in a flame went gaily dancing up the chimney; he watched them burn, and saw not they were there. Monica made some simple remark, he turned in silence and looked at her, and Isabel caught the look. '*Unless*,' she said to herself, with a smile, '*Unless*'—oh, my good sister, the time has come for that '*Unless*'.

'I will see where my uncle is;' a light figure rose, and tripped out. 'Perhaps he will join us—presently.' The 'presently' was not uttered until the door had closed behind the speaker.

Left alone with his love Dorrien's heart bounded, and he had to steady himself for a few moments ere he knew that she was speaking. She was making some gentle, commonplace observation designed to carry off the significance of the moment, and as she spoke she held out towards the fire her taper fingers, spreading them as though to feel the glow.

By a movement only half voluntary, Dorrien leaned forward and drew the hand towards him. She attempted to reclaim, he held it fast. A broken murmur. A protest. An entreaty. She knew that he was speaking; he knew that she was listening; neither was precisely conscious of what was being said or done; when from without, what was that? A sharp shrill scream ran through the house.

Dorrien dropped the hand he held. Another piercing cry—a frightful, agonised cry. At the same moment Isabel Lavenham threw herself, as it were, back into the room she had just quitted, and in shrill, terror-stricken accents, and with eyes dilated and arms extended, screamed aloud: 'Oh, Monica, he is dead! Oh, Monica, Monica, they say that he is dead!'

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

‘WHAT IS IT? WHAT HAS HAPPENED?’

Ah, what is life? with ills encompassed round,  
Amidst our hopes, fate strikes the sudden wound.—GAY.

MONICA’s first thought was that Bell had lost her pug. She had lately declared a passion for pugs, and Mr. Schofield, prompt to gratify every whim, had straightway procured a true-bred Willoughby, which was the admiration of the neighbourhood. That something had happened to this pet seemed the natural solution of Isabel’s distress, and at another time such distress would have had its due share of importance and sympathy.

But Monica was listening to another voice at the moment.

Dorrien was kneeling by her side; he had not, it is true, actually spoken words of love, but he had so perceptibly shown himself on the brink of doing so, had so risen to the occasion and the opportunity, that she could not doubt what these, left to bring forth their own fruits, would have yielded; and it did seem alike thoughtless and cruel of a sister who had but quitted the apartment a few minutes before—quitted it, moreover, because she was aware that her own presence had become intolerable—thus to break in upon precincts which should have been sacred.

What could justify such a return?

The door had burst open; and there the intruder stood, blind to all within the curtained and shaded saloon, dim now and vaguely outlined throughout; there she stood, heedless of the attitude of the one and the silent displeasure of both, with outstretched arms, wailing anew her cry of horror and amazement.

‘Good gracious, my dear sister!’ said Monica, pettishly. ‘What is all this lamentation about? You are really rather—rather extreme, are you not? Pray bear it like a Christian, Bell, if Punch, like Mrs. Proudie, “ain’t no more.” Uncle Schofield will get you another Punch.’

‘Uncle Schofield? Oh, Monica, Monica!’ With a swift rush into the room Isabel cast herself at her sister’s feet. ‘Oh, Monica, it can’t be true—can it be true? They say—don’t you hear what they say? I met them—oh!’ with another half-smothered shriek. ‘When I went out from here—three minutes ago—I had only just left this room—I saw some people at the gate—I

wondered what they could be doing there. And they came up to the door. And oh, Monica, Monica!' wringing her hands, 'do you think they can know? Oh, what do they mean? What can they mean?' and the affrighted creature hid her face afresh, clinging for support to the stronger nature on which she had ever been wont to lean.

'Perhaps I had better go out and inquire what has happened,' suggested Dorrien, who began to perceive that there was more in this than had at first appeared. 'Shall I go for you?' he added, with a certain pleasurable sensation in thus wording his offer; and at her motion of consent he went.

Outside the door he found quite an assemblage of people, but scarce a sound emanated from the entire group.

'What is it?' inquired he. Insensibly he spoke in an undertone. His eye flew from one to another. Every countenance wore an awe-stricken, paralysed expression.

'Sir, Mr. Dorrien, sir;' it was the respectable elderly manservant, who had been in the establishment for some years, who at length touched Dorrien's elbow. 'This way, sir,' and Rushton turned into the little room in which the week before Monica had been led to re-write her all-important note. Dorrien started back, for now the room had another occupant.

'Who—what—who is it?' he whispered, hoarsely. His throat felt dry and hard.

'It is—my master, sir.'

'Good God!' exclaimed Dorrien, his hands falling by his side. 'How? When? When did it happen? And—and how? Did he?—did he?' breaking off short and looking round for the information his tongue refused to crave.

'Down at the station, sir,' another person, the station master, now stepped forward. 'He,' with a movement of his hand towards the still and motionless form which had been hastily covered and laid on the centre table, 'he came down about an hour ago, or less, to meet the 4.15 down-train, the down-train from Liverpool that gets here at 4.50. He used to come by this train himself, sir; but to-day he had been out early, and only wanted to meet another gentleman who was to bring him his letters; and being rather soon upon the platform he stood talking with me, sir—not half an hour ago, sir,—and the poor fellow swept his hand across his eyes, 'and that was on the ticket-office side of the station, this side like. The train he was expecting comes in at the other platform over the way. There are two

trains in almost at the same moment, though only one runs through. I have always said it was a bad arrangement; I have indeed, sir. The up-express runs in so sharp round the turning, that any one not knowing of it, would never think it was so near. Well, sir, I ran in to give some tickets out, and Mr. Schofield he went across and met the down-train. They tell me that he set out to cross again, at the back of the carriages, as they were just going out; he was seen to go in under the bridge, where the guard's van was; and it's thought as how he was caught and knocked down by the up-train running through our station on the other line of rail—it's an express and does not stop—in the next moment. None of us heard or saw anything. We were all busy with the departing train, till the line was clear again; and then some of them cried: "There's a man lying on the rails under the bridge!" He was quite dead, sir—he must have been killed instantaneous like. It's a terrible thing, sir; and again the speaker wiped his brow and eye.

"It is the most terrible thing I ever heard of," exclaimed Dorrien, impetuously. "Good heavens! How am I to tell those poor girls?" his thoughts naturally recurring to them. "Within a few yards of his own doorstep, simply crossing as he was accustomed to cross every day of his life! How—how in the world—you say this was his daily train—how did he not know of the danger of meeting the other?"

"He never tried to do such a thing in his life, sir. Always walked up the steps by the side of the bridge, and out at the little top gate, and then over the bridge by the high road. But Mr. Rushton here tells me," indicating the silent and sorrowful Rushton, "that all day, he"—in reverence for the silent clay, one and all spoke of the dead as "he"—"he had complained of feeling unwell and dizzy like. He might have thought he did not care to climb the steps up to the side path, and would take the easier way for once. He may have felt dizzy when he was struck. Who knows?" and again all stood dumb; none caring to break such a silence.

The drawing-room door opened.

Dorrien turned hastily, and crossing the hall, met the terrified, trembling girls ere they could proceed further. They must not be allowed to learn the truth from anyone but himself.

Forgive him if, amidst all the agitation of the scene, he almost loved his task. Shocked and grieved as he was in all sincerity, it was a dear, delightful privilege to have a share in such a moment;

to be admitted to the room which now was filled with sounds of weeping ; to be appealed to, clung to, permitted to direct, suggest, and decide. His very presence was a support.

To him, after the first stupefaction of the shock had passed, the grief-stricken household turned for directions and permissions. He went and came between the hall and the drawing-room, shielded the sisters from observation and interrogation, held counsel without and within, and did not depart till it was apparent that there remained nothing further for him to do or think of.

The final arrangements made, he went in for the last time to the still darkened room in which the two orphans sat, once more bereaved of all, once more homeless, desolate, and adrift.

Isabel would now have quitted the chamber, but, unperceived, Monica held the skirt of her dress, and she was only too glad to comprehend what was intended. Her timid nature shrank from going out alone into the silent, deserted passages, through which had but just tramped those heavy feet, bearing their burden to an upper room. She would have shivered and trembled in some hidden corner close by, until her sister required her,—but it was a relief not to need to seek such a refuge.

‘I am going now, Miss Lavenham,’ said Dorrien, in a quiet voice befitting the occasion. ‘Rushton understands everything. You will not need to see anyone to-night. Good-bye,’ and in the single word ‘Good-bye’ was all the sympathy which another might have struggled to express, but which was so incomparably better left unspoken.

‘Thank you, Mr. Dorrien,’ with equal self-restraint came the still softer response.

Then there was a momentary hush—a pause,—finally a mute leave-taking and departure. He would return, he said, on the morrow, and he was not forbidden to say so. Having been present at the first awful scene, it was surely permissible that he should be admitted during the seclusion of the mourning days to follow. As he rode from the door, they watched his retreating figure disappear almost instantly in the darkness, and each echoed ‘To-morrow’ in their hearts. What would to-morrow bring ?

To both my hero and heroine it seemed years since the evening before, when just about this hour they met in the drawing-room at Bingley Hall. Each had undergone more than one revulsion of feeling, had passed through more than one phase since then. Dorrien had bared his soul to a friend, and received not only wise counsel but timely aid ; he had also en-

lightened his parents ; and he had all but knelt at the shrine of his love.

Monica had had a still more momentous history.

Her morning's experience, sufficient as it might have seemed for any one day, had been almost eclipsed by that of the afternoon, and again the earlier agitations in the hearts of each had sunk into the background behind the awful event which, as it were, set its seal upon all that had gone before.

Neither, however, but supposed that this event would in its own manner and in due season cement the bond whose formation it had for the time prevented. Dorrien drew a long breath as he cantered lightly past the Schofields' gate. 'Poor souls !' he thought, 'they little know what has happened'—(it had been arranged that a messenger should be sent to the Grange later on in the evening, after other more necessary people had been summoned). 'Poor souls ! But what an escape I have had !' reflected he, the next moment. 'To think that I might have been tied up there at this very hour ! aye, and should have been if I had not had the luck last night to go and lose my head so as to make Archie Alverstoke tackle me ! To think what a near thing it was ! Tied up to Daisy Schofield, and Monica free, and—I wonder what she will have ? If it is anything in reason—and I don't see why it should be out of reason. The poor old fellow was rich, and I suppose there is no doubt he adopted the girls. Alverstoke seemed to think there was no doubt. How very, how extraordinarily opportune ! But I am a brute to think of it. I ought to be, and I *am* sorry. I am certainly sorry. I am most awfully shocked. It is a terrible thing to happen. But, of course, I can't help knowing that it clears my way for Monica ; and when I think of Monica, by Jove ! I must be forgiven if I forget all the rest. I can pay Archie back at once—that is, as soon as things are arranged. Let me see ; how soon can I speak out ? Oh, I don't mind waiting a day or two ; it would not be decent to say anything till after the funeral ; and I may go there every day, of course. Isabel won't mind : she's my friend, and she understands. I'm awfully fond of Isabel. I wonder if she would not do for Alverstoke ;' and thus pondering and musing he made his way back through the darkened land to Cullingdon.

'My dear boy, my dear fellow,' cried Sir Arthur, half an hour later, 'I give you joy, Harry, my boy,—eh—what ? Oh, no—no ; to be sure I should not have said that—I did not mean that. I take back my words, Harry. I'm ashamed of myself ; by Jove !

ashamed of myself. Awful thing to happen—awful, awful. 'Pon my word, never was more shocked in my life. Dear me, yes; "shocked" is not the word, frowning portentously. 'Your mother must call and offer sympathy, and all the rest of it, Harry. Never neglect *les convenances*, my boy. And now, now especially, exultation again breaking loose, and betraying itself in eye and tone, 'Lady Dorrien must not be behindhand. Lavenham will sound ever so much better than Schofield; Lavenham blood and Schofield money—that's the mixture, eh, Harry? And you have managed wonderfully, my boy—wonderfully. You have gone about it so softly and quietly. Ha! ha! didn't I always say, *Chi va piano va lontano*, eh? Ha!' And he chuckled under his breath, and, while endeavouring to knit his pale brow into a befitting frown, stealthily rubbed his hands under the table.

Harry went away to dress for dinner. His father's congratulations jarred upon him. He was, he knew, at one with Sir Arthur in his secret soul, but he had just sufficient delicacy of feeling as well as kindness of heart to make him ashamed of the sentiments openly paraded by his parent. He did not like to see Sir Arthur's smile when he avowed himself shocked by the death of Monica's uncle. He recollects Monica's unfeigned sorrow, her tears, her tremblings; he called to his aid all that she had ever told him of the affection wherewith her new-found relation had inspired her; he solemnised his mind by dwelling upon the scene within the little chamber, upon the shrouded form in the midst of the appalled and shuddering group; wondered vaguely—ah, poor fellow! he had never thought much about such things before—whither the spirit of the dead had flown on the instant of its dismissal from its earthly abode; and thus seeking to sober excitement, which, in spite of every effort, continually slid into exhilaration, was at length able to descend and bear his part at the dinner-table without betraying, either by speech or countenance, anything to rouse suspicion on the part of the attendants.

After the evening meal was over he wandered about the house by himself. Somehow he felt as if he had never before done justice to his home. It was a dear old place—yes, indeed, it was a dear old place. There was a magnificent view from the gallery window; a view which only needed a little opening up. The gallery itself was a fine gallery; a little more light thrown in upon it would make it a remarkably fine gallery. The library had fallen into disorder; libraries should not be allowed to fall into disorder. The library at Cullingdon was one of the best rooms of the house. There was a nice little room out of it. The lounging went quickly

forward and passed into the little room. His eye glistened. 'I think she would like this,' he murmured beneath his breath.

He saw Monica everywhere. Her image rose before him in this attitude and that. Here, it was the *pose* of her lovely head against the light; anon the outline of her graceful figure in the shadow. His eye strayed hither and thither to the different places which had been adorned by her presence, to the articles of furniture which had been honoured by her use. Now it was a chair in which she had reclined; again a ledge against which she had leaned; and again a casement from which she had gazed.

Here, she had accepted from him a flower; there, bestowed upon him a smile. At one spot she had tormented him; at another healed him. Every nook had its own association; and every association was divine.

'Never saw a fellow so hard hit in my life; no, by Jove, I never did,' old Sir Arthur whispered and giggled. 'Just look at him, my lady; d'ye see how moonstruck the fellow is? He has been meandering about ever since dinner; going from room to room; taking up and handling things without looking at them; and never hearing a word that's said to him! And, by Jove! she's a fine girl, a deuced deal finer girl than the other; and Harry has had the *nous* to see it. Directly she came here, I said to myself it was an infernal pity that she hadn't the other's money down, and Harry might have gone over to her at once. As it is, he has managed a vast deal better. Your son knows a thing or two, my lady; he's no fool, Lady Dorrien. You will have to do whatever Harry tells you in this matter, and no words about it. You will have to forget your megrims, and trot over with him to-morrow, and leave cards, and inquiries, and all the rest of it. Harry will tell you what to do. Yes, by Jove! Lavenham blood and Schofield money; it is a glorious combination. And I don't fancy Harry will need to be told to do up the old place. That's her doing—this Lavenham girl's doing. Oh, I heard her; I heard her praising this and that; and I never was better pleased, even when I had not a notion what a turn affairs were taking. Now, of course it will be everything if she sticks to what she said then. Harry was talking about putting the library in order: I suppose that means she told him it was out of order. He tells me that we ought to see to the roof on the left wing—but, bless my soul! if we begin with roofs—however, there is no knowing where we shan't begin, if Harry takes us in hand. What will the figure be, I wonder?' musing, with his thin fingers pressed together at the tips. 'Sixty, seventy, eighty? Who is to say that it might not

be a hundred? These mercantile men think nothing of a couple of hundred thousand, and there are but the two girls. Confound it! there will be legacies, however,' his face falling; 'people are perfect idiots about legacies; and if Joseph Schofield was a cranky creature—but I don't fancy Joseph was that. No, no; he was a sensible man, a very worthy, decent sort of man; and if putting a bit of crape round my hat would please Harry, I'm sure I should have no objection in life, provided all goes well. I would do anything in the way of compliment. I'll go to the funeral if Harry wishes. Joseph is sure to have done the thing handsomely, eh, my lady? These Liverpool men always do the thing handsomely; it is part of their business; it is what they are for. Now, Joseph has been at it for, let me see,' calculating, 'for forty years or so; began young, we'll say; well, forty years in Liverpool means a long sum of addition in £. s. d. Joseph must be worth his couple of hundred thousand, eh? Well, well, hardly as much as that, perhaps; his hundred and fifty; equally divided. But then there are the legacies,' his brow again overclouding; 'who is to say how much may not be dribbled away in those confounded legacies? There ought to be a law against such infernal nonsense. Depend upon it, we shall lose something in legacies; we must make up our minds to that; but, anyway, there ought to be sixty or seventy down, and of course there is always the chance of the sister's share coming in too. I wonder how soon we shall hear; how soon it will have leaked out? If I knew anyone in Liverpool likely to be an authority I would go in to-morrow; but, at any rate, Harry can go in to-morrow; and he can go over to the house; and it can't be a secret long; the other Schofields will let it out;' and thus the well-pleased old tongue babbled on, little dreaming of the news in store.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A FEW NIGHTS AGO I WAS SO—HAPPY.

For of fortune's sharp adversitie,  
 The worst kind of infortune is this,  
 A man that hath been in prosperitie,  
 And it remembers, when it passed is.—CHAUCER.

'AND oh, dear! oh, dear! what is to be done with those poor girls?'

The speaker was Mrs. George Schofield, whose eyes were red with tears, and whose large white pocket handkerchief with its black border, formed an important feature of her lap.

'A few months ago, and I should have said, Oh, it's a terrible thing to happen ; but look, he leaves no wife and children ; and there's scarcely a man about but has his wife and children,—so that really it would not have been so bad but that it might have been worse, though perhaps I should think shame of myself for saying such a thing. But when we went over, Daisy and I, the very night we heard—such a night as it was too, blowing and raining, for all it had been such a beautiful day!—and found those two poor young creatures sitting crouching over the hearth, so miserable and lonely, I said to Daisy afterwards, "Talk of daughters, they seemed for all the world as if they had been poor cousin Joseph's own daughters!" Well, they have been treated as such ; nothing was too good for them, nor yet too grand for them ; he was so set upon those girls. Ah dear ! the question is, What will they do now ? You have heard about the will, of course ?'

Her companion was a distant relation who had come to attend the funeral. He had heard about the will. Knowing nothing of the Miss Lavenhams, and very little generally of the Schofield branch of his family, he now presumed the deceased had done the right thing, and left his money in a proper channel.

'A proper channel ! I don't know what you mean by a proper channel,' replied Mrs. Schofield, with a vague idea of resentment. 'All I know is, he has left it to none of his own people ; and though, as I say, that would have been neither here nor there three months ago,—I am sure none of *us* want it, though I did think George being in the business—but, however, let that be. But when a man takes into his house two poor penniless orphans, and in a manner adopts them, and all, he ought surely to have left them *something*. Why, here's my Daisy, she says she knows her uncle meant to do well by them both, for he was joking her one day about being an heiress—you know Daisy has her grandfather's money, Mr. Henderson, and a pretty penny it is, but that's between you and me,—well, poor cousin Joseph, only a week ago, was making fun with her on the sly ; saying that if she didn't look sharp her cousins would cut her out, for "an uncle might do as well as a grandfather at a pinch," with more of that kind of *funning*,—and though it was under pretence of teasing Daisy, who, he knew, never cared to hear this money of hers talked about, she holds to it that she was sure he was in solemn earnest all the time. He had that way with him, cousin Joseph had. When he built that fine house of his, he was for ever laughing beforehand about what he was going to do. As soon as ever he

had made up his mind to a thing he would joke about it, to kind of take off the edge. So then, directly I heard he had been joking Daisy about making more heiresses in the family, said I, "*He'll make them.*" And so he would have made them if he had but lived to do it.'

'That would hardly do to go to law with, Mrs. Schofield.'

'Nay, who said anything about the law, Mr. Henderson? Of course those that get will keep; and all I do declare is that, if my poor cousin had lived to die peaceably in his bed, he would have made a different will.'

A good many other people thought that if Mr. Schofield had lived he would have made a different will, but only one person knew how near he had been to doing so, and Monica kept her lips inscrutably sealed upon the subject.

From the first she felt no real hope. Her uncle's words had burnt themselves into her brain. 'I mean to do for you as if you were my own.' 'I intend to make a settlement.'

In such form had his communications been couched; and directly she was able to think, the remembrance lay like lead upon her heart.

Of one thing she was thankful: she had neither had time nor inclination to confide in her sister the object of the sought-for interview. At its termination she had flown to her own chamber, eager for a brief term of solitude before meeting Dorrien, and Bell's curiosity had been easily satisfied with an assurance that nothing alarming had occurred, and that further confidence should be given presently. She had been more interested in Dorrien's visit, and in trying to discover Monica's attitude towards him, than in anything her uncle Schofield might have seen fit to communicate. Subsequently she had forgotten the 'business talk' altogether.

But Monica? To Monica there was now but one question of paramount importance. Had her lost guardian carried out his intentions, or had he not? If not—farewell all besides. She was only too well aware of the absolute impossibility of her wedding one of the ruined Dorriens, unless she could replenish the fortunes of the house, to entertain the slightest hope on that score.

She had, within a few hours, learned to know how dear such a hope might become to her. But once more penniless, or almost penniless, what chance for her lover? She did Dorrien justice, because she could not help doing him justice. A woman is rarely at fault when she is the object of deep, strong, unchecked passion, and Monica Lavenham was a woman of quick apprehen-

sion and keen intuition. She had indeed been prejudiced to blindness in regard to her cousin, Daisy Schofield, but there had been abundant cause for her being so; and it may be added that, even had no explanation taken place between the girls, a very short time would have sufficed to clear away a youthful and foolish antipathy.

But with Dorrien the case was different. She had felt him hers, even before he had known himself to be so. It was no question of expediency—the expediency was all the other way. He was hers, but how long would he remain so? If only he had spoken—and yet she knew it was better that he had not spoken. It must now be her part to prevent his speaking. Should she by the wildest chance be found in possession of the fortune which her uncle had designed for her, Dorrien should be allowed to plead his cause. A word, a sign, a look would bring him at any moment; but if—she set her lips resolutely and gazed with wide-open eyes into the future—if nothing had been done, all must be over that ever might have been between her and Harry Dorrien.

Kind Mrs. Schofield, well to the front during the days of mourning which intervened between the fatal event and the last sad rites being paid, was both astonished and edified by the strict resolution with which Monica denied the house to all comers. She and Daisy had taken up their abode at Flodden Hall by the sisters' earnest request, to be with them for the time being; and with her new feelings towards the latter, and softened in all respects towards the former, Monica was now so respectful, affectionate, and considerate, that perhaps the worthy matron's indignant outburst above recorded, cued more to the recollection of that secluded period than to any previous opinion on the subject. We are all alike in our susceptibility of kindness; and although, as we have said before, Mrs. Schofield had been treated with decency, and even with good-humoured tolerance, by the Miss Lavenhams, they had never before shown, because they had never before felt, anything more.

Monica was now all attention and deference. The homely, wholesome sorrow which found vent in sighs, and tears, and many a simple reminiscence, suited her at this juncture better than finer feelings might have done; while, as for Daisy, she found Daisy more and more congenial every hour.

The cousins did everything together. Bell being laid up with a species of nervous attack which required rest and soothing atten-

tions,—required Mrs. Schofield, in short, who had the talents of a nurse and the figure for a sick-room,—the two who had erewhile been not only rivals but antagonists, were now thrown into each other's company all day long.

Was it because in Daisy's companionship Monica saw an excuse for not admitting Dorrien, that she so assiduously cultivated it? Partly. On his appearance at Flodden Hall the day after the tragic event, he had been informed that Mrs. Schofield and her daughter had taken up their residence within the mansion, and that orders had been given to exclude all others. The younger Miss Lavenham was seriously unwell from the shock.

In order to soften such a sentence, however, Monica went out to the door and exchanged a few words with the visitor. They understood—or at least he fancied they understood—each other. He was not to come because the Schofields had come. It was fitting that Mrs. Schofield and her daughter should be in the house where lay the remains of one who had not only been their near relation, but neighbour and friend; but, whilst they were there, Dorrien was better away.

'We think we had better not let in any of our friends,' said Monica softly—he told himself 'reluctantly,'—but the reluctance, if there were any, went hand in hand with resolution.

He had to ride away, and one pair of eyes from behind the blinds saw him go. Mrs. Schofield was almost vexed that no one could think of an excuse for his admission. Considering that he had been there the day before, had actually been present at the first sad scene, it seemed to her that an exception might very well be made in his favour, and as she spoke, she looked at Daisy. Daisy had on a black dress—she had had one lying by—and it now really seemed as if Daisy, if no one else, might be allowed to see Mr. Dorrien.

'I have tried to undecieve her for some time,' Daisy's little rueful face came close to Monica, 'but she clings to the idea. It will pass away. Do not mind, Monica.'

'I shall have no right to "mind" soon,' murmured poor Monica, with a set lip. But outwardly she only kissed her cousin's cheek, remarking for the first time what a soft young cheek it was. 'But for me,' she said to herself, 'he might have been happy with her; by my doing, we each lose all.'

The funeral over, it could no longer be concealed that all, so far as Mr. Schofield's adopted daughters were concerned, had been lost.

Previous to their appearance on the scene he had, under the belief that he possessed no relations who required assistance, bequeathed his wealth in the very manner most dreaded by Sir Arthur Dorrien. Sir Arthur had not indeed anticipated the full extent of the damage, having but imagined, at the worst, a curtailment of the young ladies' fortunes by ten thousand pounds or so. Imagine then his feelings on hearing that the whole had gone, and gone to public charities and benevolent institutions!

No second will had been made, none had even been spoken about to the legal adviser who now produced the document; and it could therefore be but a matter of pure conjecture whether or not any other might ultimately have taken its place.

Under such circumstances nothing could be said. The Miss Lavenhams had barely been three months resident beneath their uncle's roof; so that, although it was easy to surmise that they might eventually have become his heirs, no one could positively assert that they would have done so. Certainly no claim could be put forward on their behalf.

'Good God! Alverstoke, she hasn't a penny!' Dorrien's voice was hoarse, and his eyes were strained and bloodshot. He had taken horse and galloped the entire distance between his own door and that of his friend, and now burst in, without waiting either for permission or announcement.

Luckily Alverstoke was alone.

'Hasn't a penny!' echoed the latter, rising to his feet and suddenly sitting down again. 'I—stop a moment. I don't understand. You mean Miss Lavenham, of course?'

'Of course; who else should I mean?' loudly. 'I tell you it has all come out,—we knew we should hear to-day,—and, by Heaven! we *have* heard. So there is an end of *me*!' and he dashed his hat and whip on to the table and flung himself down, staring at his companion with wild, passionate orbs.

'When did you hear?' said Alverstoke.

'Just now. Not an hour ago. I was at the funeral; and just as I was wondering who I should hang on to, to hear about matters, I met Carnforth. I guessed that Carnforth would know, and he did. He told me everything.'

'What, *he* told you? It may not be so bad then, if you only had it from Carnforth,' observed Alverstoke, drily. 'I should not go by what any one of the Carnforths say.'

'No more I did; but—but I am ashamed to say it—I went to old Mr. Rowland next, and his word is another man's oath, and—

and it's true, by God, it's true!'—throwing himself into a fresh attitude.

'Don't give up hope, Harry.'

'I have not given up hope—hope has given up *me*. You don't know how I have held on. I have been half afraid—uneasy—I don't know what. I did not like her refusing to see me, and the Schofields' being there. I feared they might have been saying things;—

'Well, they might, you know.'

'Of course they might, but Monica knew all there was to know about that long ago. I told her a lie about it too, but she had got over the lie. She—oh! she had grown to forgive me everything,' and his head dropped upon his hands.

'It is rough upon you, Harry.' Alverstoke rose up and put his hand for a moment on Dorrien's shoulder. 'I suppose——' he began thoughtfully, and paused.

'Nothing can be done now—nothing,' said Dorrien, in a broken voice. 'You did all for me that a fellow could do, but there is no way out of this. We are a ruined race. The sins of our fore-fathers have found us out. If I had had but a pittance,—but how could I ask a girl like that to share a pittance?'

People do, you know.'

'It is no matter,' said Dorrien, with impatience; 'I have not got it. I have nothing, absolutely nothing but what my father allows me; and *you* know, Alverstoke, what I should have to expect from that quarter. I ought not to blame him either. Until lately—until I met with—with her, I felt as he did. Marriage without money was a thing impossible in our family. We are draining our very life's blood to keep going as it is. Oh! a few nights ago I was—so—happy.'

Alverstoke threw a log upon the fire, and trampled it down with his foot. He would not look anywhere but into the blaze he made.

For a brief period the clock ticked on in the room, and its monotonous note was the only sound that broke the silence.

'Have you seen her at all, since?' inquired Alverstoke, at last.

'Only once. The next day. She came to the door to tell me I was not to go in. That was all.'

'Do you suppose she knew, then?'

'I do not suppose she was thinking about it. The Schofields were there, and of course I—they—it would not have done to admit me. As soon as I knew they were to be in the house for a time, I understood, of course, that I must wait.'

'You have not met again ?'

'Met the Schofields ?'

'No, Miss Lavenham. You did not see her to-day ?'

'I saw her. She was there. I did not get near her. The family party kept together ; and after we left the churchyard their carriage had gone. Those of us who were merely there as outsiders walked off down to the train. It was then I walked with Carnforth. Afterwards I got into the railway carriage with old Mr. Rowland.'

'And is it absolutely certain ?'

'Absolutely. Rowland had been hearing all about it just before the funeral, from the solicitor himself. The house will be sold ; young Schofield succeeds to the business ; as for the rest—he had no "rest" to think about when he made the will.'

'The poor girls must turn out, then ?'

'Must turn out ? Yes. Go where they came from, or where they can get—or, in short, anywhere. A nice look-out, isn't it ? Not twenty years old yet, and twice turned out of house and home ! Good Heavens ! When I think of it !' and he tossed hither and thither, finding torture in every fresh movement.

'It is bad luck,' said Alverstoke in his soft, dreamy drawl. 'I never heard of worse luck. If there were anything one could do—,'

—'There is nothing one can do. In my first idiocy I rushed straight to Sir Arthur. I thought, if it was possible—if I could make him believe my honour was pledged—but I was a fool. I might have known it would be no use. He cannot give what he has not got ; and if I had been engaged ten times over it must have been the same—all must have come to an end now ; so—' and he drew a long burning breath and bit the lip which betrayed him by its movement.

'I suppose—you—you could not work ?' said Alverstoke, hesitating.

'Work ? I am nearly thirty years of age, and I have never worked in my life. Who would care for my "work" now ? I know nothing—I can do nothing. My father would as soon have thought of setting me to labour in the fields, as of having me taught anything by which I could earn a penny. We have been fools all through—now we shall be beggars.'

'I suppose your father is very much cut up ?'

'Raves,' said Dorrien, curtly.

'And your mother ?'

‘I don’t know anything about her.’

‘You had better come and stop with me—you must get away.’

Dorrien rose from his chair.

‘Don’t think me ungrateful,’ he said, huskily; ‘and don’t call me a driveller; but I am going to hang on still to—to—’

—‘To what?’

‘To a hope—to a chance. It may not be as bad as they say. I tell myself it is. I know it is—but I cannot yet *feel* that it is. Anyhow I’ll wait. I won’t do anything till—till *she* goes. And then—.’ He broke off with his back to his companion.

‘Well? And then?’

Dorrien affected not to hear.

‘And then?’ said Alverstoke, standing in front of him.

Dorrien turned his head, and looked for his accoutrements.

‘What shall you do then, Dorrien?’

‘Go to the devil,’ said Dorrien, shortly.

(To b. continued.)

## *On Autographs.*

### II.

IT was asserted in a former paper that the value attaching to the notes which chronicle the trivialities belonging to the lives of eminent men lies in the fact that we take the writers, as it were, unawares and in undress, catching them, like those who are made the victims of a detective camera, when, altogether unconscious that they are sitting for their portrait, they have relaxed those efforts to appear at their best, which the least vain of mankind are accustomed, under like circumstances, to make. 'I write not so much to give information,' explained in such a note not long ago a modern master of style, 'as to . . . illustrate in passing that I can get lost in grammar like a common man.' And it is in such aberrations, in other matters besides grammar, that we hope to trace the natural tendencies of the writer when he has forgotten to pose for the public. But there are those with regard to whom such a hope would be vain. In the case, for example, of the author of 'Political Justice'—a note from whose hand, though not properly belonging to the collection of letters with which we are immediately concerned, we proceed to quote—we feel that it would be altogether impossible to take him by surprise, that each word, written or uttered, each trifling action he performed, was a carefully calculated and well-considered touch added to the portrait of himself, which he offered for the admiration of mankind and intended to bequeath to posterity. If we ourselves, now that the glamour which dazzled the eyes of his contemporaries is faded, consider that certain touches would have been better omitted, that is a matter of taste, and does not affect the intention with which they were applied; nor would it, we may be sure, have been Godwin's own opinion. His mistakes, if mistakes they were, were intentional and deliberate, never accidental.

Take, for instance, the note we give. It is only a complaint

of having been twice turned away from the door of a friend upon whom he had intended to confer the honour of a visit ; yet, in its tone of dignified reproach, of lofty self-respect mingled with proud humility, and of conscious rectitude, it is a work of art complete in itself, and one of which we observe that Godwin himself was careful to preserve a copy. It is the note of a man who feels the eyes of the world upon him, and cannot afford, even for a moment, to lose sight of his audience :

‘ Dear Madam,’ he writes, addressing Mrs. Inchbald, ‘ I have all my life been unwilling to put an ill-construction on an ambiguous action ; and therefore, though I was sent away in somewhat of a rude manner from your door some months ago, I would not believe that anything unkind or unfriendly was intended. The repetition of the same thing last Monday seems to leave no room for doubt.

‘ One reason of my confidence was the clearness of my conscience and my perfect assurance that, since I last had the pleasure of seeing you, at Earl’s Terrace and Lennard House, I had done nothing that could give you the slightest occasion for displeasure. Is it too much to ask what is my offence ? My creed does not direct me to confess to a priest, but I am not the less anxious to stand discharged to my own conscience.

‘ I have had the happiness to know you five-and-twenty years, and in all that time I can fully acquit you of any capricious action towards me. Is it worth while to change the tenour of your conduct towards me so late in the day ? You, I have no doubt, can say with King Henry in the song “ God-a-mercy, I have a hundred as good as ever was he,” and therefore can part with me without compunction, but I must take up the exclamation of King James, “ Alas, woe is me, such another, England within, shall never be ! ” Give me leave to inscribe myself, with much regard and attachment, very faithfully yours.’

It is the privilege of the artist to make capital out of his misfortunes. Godwin, we feel sure, as he laid the copy complacently away, derived, from the form into which he had thrown his reproaches, some consolation for the slight which had called them forth. Whether or not the desired effect was produced upon the culprit we have no means of ascertaining. Possibly, viewing the incident in the light of the letter from Mrs. Inchbald which follows, we are justified in concluding that those five-and-twenty years to which her correspondent makes his appeal may have been themselves the criminals, and her refusal to admit him

the beginning of that system of isolation to which it points. It is the answer to an invitation to dinner, and runs thus :

‘ My dear Sir,—To anyone who had not read “ the Prime of my Life ” I should be ashamed to say that which I am going to say to you.

‘ I no longer take pleasure in society, except in that homely society I see every day, and which (for in that consists my partiality) see *me every day*, and do not (I hope) see *me grow old*. I wish to be admired by *you*, and would not meet you in the street for twenty guineas, much less dine with you, I am of late so altered.

‘ You have tempted me beyond measure with your company, and if you would all consent to be blindfolded I might perhaps be prevailed on to come; but then I should be in agony for fear either your or Mr. Edeworth’s bandage should drop off.

‘ My compliments to Mrs. Godwin. I am highly obliged by the assurances with which her invitation is adorned, but even my obligation will not induce me to become the foil of her youth in such excellent company. Adieu. When I am a little more accustomed to my old age I trust I shall feel the pang far less; till when I decline all visits but to those to whom I dare not trust the feelings I have revealed to you, because they detest all follies but their *own*. ‘ E. INCHBALD.’

There it stands, carefully preserved by her confidant, an exhibition of human nature perhaps, but surely of human nature exaggerated to the point of caricature; a record of that vanity which carries its own chastisement, and which yet is not without a certain sordid pathos of its own. We are sorry for the woman who dared not face her friend’s eyes lest she should read in them the reflection of her own decay. There is a singular mixture in it, too, of cowardice and of courage—of cowardice in yielding to the weakness and courage in avowing it. She would rather Godwin, philosopher though he were, should know her for a fool than for a woman past her prime. And who shall say that she was not the best judge? ‘ Pan is dead, but Venus is grown old.’ We remember that the errant monk who, according to the legend, suffered the disenchantment of that revelation, returned with haste to his cloister, never to be troubled more by beguiling visions.

If the letter does in truth furnish the explanation of the writer’s refusal to receive Godwin’s visits, the refusal itself, instead

of the rebuff it would appear at first sight, is only another proof, where proofs abound, of the extraordinary estimation in which he was held by his contemporaries—an estimation so great that in Mrs. Inchbald's case she elected rather to cut herself off from his society altogether than run the risk of lessening the admiration she prized so highly. As one observes the conspiracy of adulation entered into by those who surrounded him, one is forced to acknowledge that it would have been a miracle indeed—and miracles were not in Godwin's line—had he succeeded in viewing himself in any other light than that in which they had agreed to regard him.

'This is a sad breach of punctilio,' writes Sir Thomas Lawrence, after begging permission to change the day for which he had invited him to dinner, 'but you must forgive it, sir, or you will give me a triumph. I shall say that you are less benevolent than I thought you were, and perhaps boast of finding one part of your character at least in which you are not different from common men.'

Did the painter, one wonders, deliver himself of his graceful menace with a half smile and a shrewd suspicion that in one respect, at all events, though not that to which his words pointed, the invited guest was not exempt from the weaknesses of 'common men'? The language of flattery was, no doubt, part of the elaborate and somewhat stilted courtesy of the age, yet the amount of it which seems to have been administered to Godwin justifies us in assuming that it was more than usually welcome. The supply, in this case as in others, equals the demand, and the character of the homage offered at a shrine may fairly be regarded as furnishing some indication of the nature and tastes of the divinity within. And if this be so, the man whose acquaintance with his second wife was inaugurated by the exclamation on her part, 'Is it possible that I behold the immortal Mr. Godwin himself?' was not likely, as his biographer hints, to be over-fastidious as to the quality of the incense he received.

It is a relief, as we turn over the papers, to find Charles Lamb (in a letter which, being already printed, we do not give here) asserting himself so far as to inform his friend—though, as we feel, with tears in his eyes, and, as he says himself, with 'trembling anxiety'—that he can make no exception, even in Godwin's favour, to the rule he had been compelled to lay down as to the exclusion of visitors in the forenoon. How necessary the regulation had been we infer from another note before us, in which, after saying

that he had been 'strangely hindered' in a work he had in hand, he proceeds to specify the nature of the hindrance. We, as we read, could wish it were stranger! 'I set to it in earnest yesterday morning,' he writes, 'and rap-rap came a knock and one of the Lloyds (whom you know I love!) from Birmingham, and no more business could be done that day.' The little ebullition of impatience gives the touch of nature which—in the matter of morning visitors at least—makes the least of us feel our kinship to Charles Lamb. For the spiritual descendants of the Lloyds of Birmingham still flourish and are mighty in the land, and others besides their then victim are, by their means, 'strangely hindered' in whatever work they have set themselves to do.

On another occasion we find Lamb once more in a genuine fit of ill-humour, this time directed against Godwin himself. It is true his anger was not without justification. To be called upon—and that not once, but apparently again and again—to produce a manuscript which has not only been mislaid, but which, if discovered, would do no credit to the writer, is a test which might well try the most serene artistic temper, and that of Lamb had plainly not been proof against it.

'My dear sir,' he writes in evident irritation, 'I assure you positively that what I had begun to write about Chaucer was so inconsiderable that you could make no possible use of it. I have it not, and if I could recover it I should be extremely hurt to be obliged to show it you. I beg you to let the matter now rest, and unless you wish to tease and vex me, that you will not mention it again. I hoped that I had said enough before.'

'Yours truly, C. LAMB.'

And so, not surely in a characteristic mood, we leave Charles Lamb, returning to more recent times and to the order of the alphabet, from which we departed to set Godwin and his friends together in one group.

Here we find a letter from Mr. W. E. Greg, too lengthy to quote in its integrity, which, starting from the question of the expediency or the reverse of the recall of Lord Raglan, proceeds to the discussion of the wider issues the subject suggests. For a teacher who, in one department at least of speculative thought, was content to leave so much in doubt, he strikes us as somewhat intolerant of indecision or vacillation in matters temporal on the part of those whose difficult duty it is to guide the destinies of mankind. Possibly he failed to take into due account the positive inability

to arrive at a decision with which some minds are afflicted. ‘ You don’t know how lazy I am ! ’ replied the candid beggar when reproached with his idleness, and the plea is not without its fragment of a neglected truth. The laziness is a physical condition which it is as necessary to include in the reckoning as any other factor. ‘ You don’t know how undecided I am ! ’ would be the corresponding complaint of many a hard-pressed and equally candid politician. And the more conscientiously the endeavour is made to see all sides of a question the more paralysed is action. Greg, however, has no doubts as to his own opinions.

After animadverting with severity upon the ‘ permanent evil and difficulty of our administrative system—which is not to regard fitness in our appointments or unfitness in our dismissals—in fact, *never* to dismiss or recall,’ and after discussing at some length the reasons for the apparent difficulty experienced by ministers in making fit appointments, he proceeds to give his own views upon government.

I believe,’ he writes, in allusion to the House of Commons, ‘ I believe a bold and resolute minister might easily get the command of it. But, unfortunately, moral courage seems even more wanting among ministers than among senators. None of them seem to know how much safety there lies in daring. I incline to think that a really courageous Premier might soon be independent of, or master of the House of Commons, just as a really honest and courageous member might soon make himself independent of, or master of his constituency. But,’ ends Mr. Greg regretfully, ‘ the faith is wanting.’

It is possible that some of the more timid amongst us may consider that the absence of that political faith which the writer deplores is not so much one of the pressing ‘ Enigmas of Life ’ as its presence would be an omen and presage of ‘ Rocks Ahead ! ’ Mr. Greg’s own ideal of government plainly approximates to that indicated by Mr. Kinglake, when—the historian of the war following close upon the heels of its critic—after acknowledging the gift of a photograph of the present Czar, he adds, ‘ it was a kind thought of yours to aid me in my somewhat wild desire to learn the prospects of Europe by consulting a face as an oracle.’

We pass rapidly over the letters which follow, pausing to notice one from Lord Hardinge, in which the old soldier alludes to a prayer, ‘ beautiful, simple, and touching,’ which his grandchildren are learning by heart ; and another in which Sir John Herschel has quitted, for the moment, the contemplation of the stars to

concern himself with sublunary matters, and, like Mr. Greg, is troubled by the shortcomings of statesmen.

Kingsley, too, as he comes before us here, strikes the same note of dissatisfaction, though in his case the cause is different. He wishes he could see more of his correspondent and gain from him 'some of that purity of taste which I find it so difficult to keep up in this "spasmodic" and tawdry age of Pre-raphaelitism . . . In these confused days one takes refuge more and more with those who, in addition to cultivated minds, keep their chivalry and old-fashioned high principle.'

He is not the first, nor will he be the last, who has desired to destroy the tree and retain the fruit. There is something of poetical justice in the lamentation of the foe of mediævalism over the chivalry which was one of its products.

Another, and a very different philosopher, follows. George Cornwall Lewis writes, dealing with the question of punishment temporal and eternal. Slight and cursory as is his treatment of the subject, there is something in the tone of his letter which inclines us, possibly unfairly, to class the mood in which it was written as one of those in which the problems which have been matters of life and death importance to generation after generation of mankind serve only as riddles and acrostics upon which to exercise ingenuity or sharpen wit.

'I can't admit,' he says, 'that *retaliation* has properly anything to do with punishment by men. It may be considered the principle of eternal punishment by God, inasmuch as here the punishment bears no proportion to the offence, and is much severer than is requisite for prevention. However, Warburton and those who agree with him lay great stress upon the preventive effects of posthumous punishment, and argue that without a religion based on the hope of heaven and the fear of hell society could not hold together.'

Quitting the domain of philosophy, we enter on the next page upon the higher (or lower) province of art.

There are few attitudes of mind more characteristic than that of the artist towards his own work. The spirit of insincere or half-sincere depreciation; the genuine and in some cases paralysing humility; the astonishing hopefulness in the face of failure, or the corresponding undue despondency; the self-appreciation, distinct from conceit, and the serene confidence of merit—all these are to be met with at any time in the artistic world. It is not easy for the literary man to steer clear of the dangers which beset him, whether, as so frequently happens in the case of the artist who

writes not for his public but for the love of his art, he suffers to an undue extent, as years go by, from the 'critical fastidiousness which time teaches and never satisfies'—the quotation is from a letter of Lord Houghton's which lies before us—or whether—and this is the peculiar temptation of fortune's favourites—having found his audience over-indulgent, he learns to treat it with contempt, and to consider anything and everything good enough to be thrown to the dog who is waiting for its bone. It would be well, in this latter case, that he should bear in mind that, in forgetting what is due to his public he forgets also what is due to himself, and, to make use of a somewhat finely drawn theological distinction, that if the brute creation can claim no rights with regard to its master, man, yet that it in no wise follows that man is thereby exempted from duties towards it.

In the service of art, as in another service, the labourer may well feel that, when all is done, he is but an unprofitable servant; but there are nevertheless degrees and differences in the amount and quality of the service rendered which a wise man, no less in his own case than in that of others, cannot but recognise; and when we shall have arrived at his genuine estimate of his own work, we shall be some way advanced towards the formation of a true estimate of himself.

The difficulty, and it is no imaginary one, is to get at his opinion of it at all. If he thinks well of his performance he is also apt to think it well to disguise his favourable opinion; if, on the other hand, in his heart he thinks ill of it, he is not unlikely to adopt a tone by which, having failed to impose upon himself, he yet hopes to perform the less difficult feat of imposing upon the world. It has become a truism—one of those truisms which are only partially true—that a man is accepted at his own valuation, and it is no doubt a temptation to which many succumb to try how far the dictum holds good. The generality of mankind are more eager to defend their reputations, literary or other, when they have a lurking suspicion that they do not merit defence, and to cry up their wares when a misgiving assails them that they are of doubtful value.

But whether or not what the writer says of his own work is always to be accepted as the accurate expression of his inner conviction, his attitude towards it, his manner of accepting failure or success, of receiving commendation or criticism or blame, is not uninstructive in itself.

Here, for instance, is a letter which affords not a little insight into the character of the writer:

'Some time ago,' he says, 'I got a very kind and most gratifying letter from you on the subject of my volume. . . . I ought to have acknowledged it sooner, for I felt and still feel that such a testimony in my favour, from a truth-speaking man . . . outweighs a hundred reviews, and I have some thoughts of having it framed and glazed and hung up opposite to me as a set-off against the obliquities of the periodical press, which, if it sometimes found fault in the right place, and nothing more, would, I think, be far better entitled to our thanks than when it picks out our worst things for our best or damns us with faint praise. The recollection of having touched a sympathetic chord in the heart of one who deservedly stands so high . . . will continue to shield me against all the arrows that Malice or Ignorance may draw from their quivers.'

One wonders what would have been the consequence had the one 'truth-speaking man' blamed and the hundred reviews praised. But in the meantime, recognising how the arrows of malice and ignorance had stung and rankled, we are glad that their victim had found some salve for the wounds they inflicted.

A more cheerful letter, which has been printed elsewhere, follows. The public has been kind to Macaulay. His *Lays* have met with an unexpected success, and he is not above enjoying it, although modestly ascribing the favourable verdict of the world to the fact that a failure had been anticipated. We should be inclined to ascribe it to another cause. The public is generally kind to those who can dispense with its kindness, and it was not impossibly on this principle that it treated Lord Macaulay so well. His estimate, whether altogether candid or not, has, in the case at least of his verse, been endorsed by posterity.

A curious example of diffidence follows, on the part of a greater man than Macaulay. Reading it, one is tempted to think that the humility expressed is so great that it would have taken a saint—but who shall say that the writer was not one?—not to be proud of it! John Henry Newman—not yet cardinal—has often wished to send his correspondent a book of his own, but though he had published various works had thought none of them likely to be acceptable.

'Now, however,' he continues, 'I thought I would run the risk, and send you the small volume [of verses] I was publishing, though it was a bold step. . . . With so much diffidence did I do so that I first put down your name in the list I sent to my

publishers, then took it off, and ultimately changed my mind and restored it. I am indeed fortunate to have persisted in my intention. I have gained a great and unexpected reward, both in the kind way in which you received it and in the words with which you have accompanied your acknowledgment. I assure you they are not thrown away upon me, and that I am with great sincerity yours gratefully,

‘JOHN H. NEWMAN.’

And, last of these letters, comes the following. It is that of a man not otherwise than humble, but yet who was not without faith in himself; and in the light of the oblivion which has fallen upon the writer, contains a pathos of its own :

‘To me it appears,’ he says, ‘that the desire for fame, “that last infirmity of noble minds,” weakens as we grow older; the “fit audience” day by day is minished; the men we cared for, and who cared for us, are shaken down, or fallen into the yellow leaf, deaf to the charmer, charm he never so wisely.

‘*You* were happy in winning renown while you were young; while those whom you looked up to hailed with joy your rising, while, perhaps, your parents might be living to be proud of your reputation.

‘But for me, if the poem I am now finishing should be well reputed of, what remains? Some two or three eminent men . . . to speak kindly of me! A few remaining brothers and sisters! and for the rest,

‘I fruitless mourn to them who cannot hear,  
And weep the more because I weep in vain.’

Here is something touching about the anticipation of a success which is doomed to be unshared; and possibly it is not the less so because the event proved the regret unnecessary. He need not have troubled himself. Over the grave—it shall be an anonymous one—of his literary reputation, the melancholy old epitaph might fitly be inscribed :

Whether he laughed, whether he cried,  
Nobody smiled, nobody sighed.  
Where he is and how he fares,  
Nobody knows and nobody cares.

It has probably occurred to most of us at times that we should like to have a hand in the redistribution of success, as of other kinds of worldly commodities. But, that being denied to us, it is well to remember for our consolation that one refuge, unique in its absolute security, ever remains open to those to whom contemporaneous opinion has refused fame, that there is one court to

which their appeal can always be carried, and that—and this is not among the least of its advantages—it is one of which the verdict will never be pronounced till they are safely out of hearing.

It is a curious coincidence that, almost next to Macaulay's cheerful recognition of his own success, comes another and a very different estimate of him from that which the kindly public had seen fit to form.

'It has occurred to me,' writes John Stuart Mill, 'since our conversation about Macaulay, that you might like to see a specimen of his statesmanship in India. I therefore send you a draft of a despatch to India, prepared by myself, on one of his measures. The authorities at this house went entirely with me, but Hobhouse would not: the thing dropped, and nothing has been written to India on the subject at all.'

'Do not think that a style so controversial as that of this paper is what I think desirable, or what I generally practise in official correspondence: it is by no means so, but this paper was written in ill-health, in the domestic distress of last year, and I may add *against time*, having to be written before I could get away, to go abroad for my health. I left it in hands quite capable of moderating the tone, and altering what seems polemical in its character; and we often find it necessary to write our despatches *first* for effect *here*, upon the Directors and the India Board, and *afterwards* shape them into something more suitable to the dignity of official authority exercised *over* gentlemen *by* gentlemen.'

'In any case you will sympathise in the annoyance of one who, having for years (contrary to the instincts of his own nature, which are all for *rapid* change) assisted in nurturing and raising up a system of cautious and deliberate measures for a great public end, and having been rewarded with a success quite beyond expectation, finds them upset in a week by a coxcombical dilettante litterateur who never did a thing for a practical object in his life.'

'Ever yours, J. S. MILL.'

Again, passing on, we meet with an abrupt transition. 'It must have been a very bold ghost!' The remark recurs to our memory as one or two words in the letter, from Miss Martineau, which comes next in order, catch our eye. We are too much inclined to look at all subjects from a selfish point of view, and perhaps the terrors which might be occasioned to a wanderer from the kingdom of spirits by a meeting with one of the strong-minded

fellowship, to whom his presence might appear in the light of an audacious and unwarranted refutation of their theories, has not been sufficiently taken into account. However that may be, should Miss Martineau have experienced such a visitation, which of us is safe? But we look again and are reassured. It was by a ghost no more substantial, to speak paradoxically, than that of a conversation by which she found herself confronted, and the apparition is only incidentally mentioned in a letter of which the main interest lies in the drowning experience of a certain Captain Beaufort, supplemented by an analogous one on the part of Lord Houghton.

‘When my friend, Mr. R. M. Milnes, came to see me lately,’ Miss Martineau writes, ‘I asked him how I could get at the letter written by Captain Beaufort to Wollaston (on the subject of his drowning sensations), without troubling Captain B., who is about the busiest man of my acquaintance. Mr. Milnes said that he could tell me all that was in the letter; and then told me that in a moment of utmost danger, by a fall of his horse, his feelings had been precisely similar. His foot was entangled in the stirrup, and while his head was among the horse’s feet, and jerked along the road, and he had given up all idea of surviving, he not only *saw* his home when the tidings of his death should be made known there, but *saw* what Captain Beaufort describes—the whole of his life, with its minutest incidents, before him as in a map or picture. His state of feeling was also like Captain B.’s;—he viewed these things, as it were, purely *intellectually*—“without hope or fear, or sense of responsibility.” (I believe these are Captain B.’s words; they are Mr. Milnes.’)

It was with a ghost of this conversation with Mr. Milnes which, on opening a book after his departure, she met, and she further proceeds to quote like experiences of her own, suffered in dreams. The idea of Miss Martineau dreaming, whether asleep or awake, strikes one as somewhat incongruous. Her brain was not surely the stuff which dreams are made of, and we are tempted to think that, as in the case of the ghost, it must have been a bold dream by which she was visited. The story has been related of a dream gone astray which, like a misdirected letter, reached the wrong person. One can only hope that in Miss Martineau’s case such a mistake never occurred, and that it was only by visions specially adapted for such a destiny, well considered, carefully chosen, and of which the events were arranged in due and logical sequence, that her slumbers were invaded. But to proceed with her letter. ‘Is there not,’ she continues, ‘an approach to such an experience under

all circumstances of known personal danger;—and in proportion to the urgency of the danger;—allowing for difference of faculty? I am disposed to think so, after a pretty ample experience of such peril in my travels. I imagine it not to be a sensation singular in kind but only in degree;—though perhaps scarcely to be recognised as such, under such prodigious augmentation as the urgency of the excitement may occasion. It now occurs to me that a friend of mine was barely saved from drowning. I will ask him. What struck me in his case was, that the thought of his child seemed to him to bring the blood from the brain back to the heart, and nerved his limbs for one more struggle,—which was seen from the shore, and he was saved.'

There is something in this last narrated experience of yet another of that bevy of friends who appear to have been rescued from imminent destruction in order to contribute their quota of evidence to Miss Martineau's stock of information, which appeals to us more than the rest. As an American author has said, there are persons who have no right to die—though not unfrequently they disregard their responsibilities and take it.

Before quitting the M.s and concluding this paper, we catch a glimpse of Macready at Sherborne, and perceive that the eminent actor has not, in the retirement of his later years, forgotten or wholly disused the exercise of his art. Possibly, indeed, the part he has now elected to perform is not the easiest of those he has played. For it is to keep Christmas merrily!

‘I strive,’ he writes on Christmas Day, 1857, ‘to make Christmas as old-fashioned as its old customs teach . . . Our old-fashioned house is garnished with holly and mistletoe, the yule-log burns upon the hearth, the wassail-bowl is attempted, and in place of carols Milton’s hymn to the Nativity is repeated by the children at night as a regular Christmas celebration. But I will not detain you with the account of our rusticities. “Time is our tedious” tale “should have an ending . . .”

‘Always and sincerely yours,

W. C. MACREADY.’

Writing in the middle of the performance, he does not inform us whether his own remarkable histrionic powers, coupled with the attention evidently bestowed upon details—the wassail-bowl, &c.—had made a success of the piece. It is, at all events, an enterprise which others with fewer natural advantages will scarcely be encouraged to attempt.

I. A. TAYLOR.

of the present time—events having regard to our own country the politics of which are not to be described in a few words, but to you as a foreigner you will be glad to know that the result of all this is that the religious institutions of all our Churches are in a state of being—spared of all religious regulation of any kind—entirely at your own free will you can add or take away any thing that you please, and so have been a most remarkable change in the religious institutions of this country.

## Melissa's Tour.

LUCY looked across the table at me with a face of blank horror. 'Oh, Vernon,' she cried, 'what are we *ever* to do? And an American at that! This is just *too* ghastly!' It's a habit of Lucy's, I may remark, to talk *italics*.

I laid down my coffee-cup, and glanced back at her in surprise. 'Why, what's up?' I exclaimed, scanning the envelope close. 'A letter from Oxford, surely. Mrs. Wade, of Christ Church—I thought I knew the hand. And *she's* not an American.'

'Well, look for yourself!' Lucy cried, and tossed the note to me, pouting. I took it and read. I'm aware that I have the misfortune to be only a man, but it really didn't strike me as quite so terrible.

'Dear Mrs. Hancock,—George has just heard that your husband and you are going for a trip to New York this summer. Could you manage to do us a *very great* kindness? I hope you won't mind it. We have an American friend—a Miss Easterbrook, of Kansas City—niece of Professor Asa P. Easterbrook, the well-known Yale geologist, who very much wishes to find an escort across the Atlantic. If you would be so good as to take charge of her, and deliver her safely to Dr. Horace Easterbrook, of Hoboken, on your arrival in the States, you would do a good turn to her, and, at the same time, confer an eternal favour on

'Yours very truly,  
'EMILY WADE.'

Lucy folded her hands in melodramatic despair. 'Kansas City!' she exclaimed, with a shudder of horror. 'And Asa P. Easterbrook! A geologist, indeed! That horrid Mrs. Wade! She just did it on purpose!'

'It seems to me,' I put in, regarding the letter close, 'she did it merely because she was asked to find a chaperon for the girl; and she wrote the very shortest possible note, in a

perfunctory way, to the very first acquaintance she chanced to hear of who was going to America.'

'Vernon!' my wife exclaimed, with a very decided air, 'you men are such simpletons! You credit everybody always with the best and purest motives. But you're utterly wrong. I can see through that woman. The hateful, hateful wretch! She did it to spite me! Oh, my poor, poor boy; my dear, guileless Bernard!'

Bernard, I may mention, is our eldest son, aged just twenty-four, and a Cambridge graduate. He's a tutor at King's, and though he's a dear good fellow, and a splendid long-stop, I couldn't myself conscientiously say I regard guilelessness as quite his most marked characteristic.

'What are you doing?' I asked, as Lucy sat down with a resolutely determined air at her writing-table in the corner.

'Doing!' my wife replied, with some asperity in her tone. 'Why, answering that hateful, detestable woman!'

I glanced over her shoulder, and followed her pen as she wrote

'My dear Mrs. Wade,—It was *indeed* a delight to us to see your neat little handwriting again. *Nothing* would give us greater pleasure, I'm sure, than to take charge of your friend, who, I'm confident, we shall find a most charming companion. Bernard will be with us, so she won't feel it dull, I trust. We hope to have a very delightful trip, and your happy thought in providing us with a travelling companion will add, no doubt, to all our enjoyment—especially Bernard's. We both join in very kindest regards to Mr. Wade and yourself, and I am ever

'Yours most cordially,

'LUCY B. HANCOCK.'

My wife fastened down the envelope with a very crushing air. 'There, *that* ought to do for her,' she said, glancing up at me triumphantly. 'I should think she could see from that, if she's not as blind as an owl, I've observed her atrocious designs upon Bernard, and mean to checkmate them. If, after such a letter, she has the cheek to send us her Yankee girl to chaperon, I shall consider her lost to all sense of shame and all notions of decency. But she won't, of course. She'll withdraw her unobtrusively.' And Lucy flung the peccant sheet that had roused all this wrath on to the back of the fireplace with offended dignity.

She was wrong, however. By next evening's post a second letter arrived, more discomposing, if possible, to her nerves than the first one.

‘Mrs. Lucy B. Hancock, London.

‘Dear Madam,—I learn from my friend Mrs. Wade, of Oxford College, that you are going to be kind enough to take charge of me across the ocean. I thank you for your courtesy, and will gladly accept your friendly offer. If you will let me know by what steamer you start, I will register my passage right away in Liverpool. Also, if you will be good enough to tell me from what *dépôt* you leave London, and by what train, I will go along with you in the cars. I’m unused to travel alone.

‘Respectfully,

‘MELISSA P. EASTERBROOK.’

Lucy gazed at it in despair. ‘A creature like that!’ she cried, all horror-struck. ‘Oh, my poor dear Bernard! The ocean, she says! Go along with you in the cars! Melissa P. Easterbrook! ’

‘Perhaps,’ I said tentatively, ‘she may be better than her name. And at any rate, Bernard’s not *bound* to marry her! ’

Lucy darted at me profound volumes of mute feminine contempt. ‘The girl’s pretty,’ she said at last, after a long deep pause, during which I had been made to realise to the full my own utter moral and intellectual nothingness. ‘You may be sure she’s pretty. Mrs. Wade wouldn’t have foisted her upon us if she wasn’t pretty, but unspeakable. It’s a vile plot on her part to destroy my peace of mind. You won’t believe it, Vernon: but I *know* that woman. And what does the girl mean by signing herself “Respectfully,” I wonder? ’

‘It’s the American way,’ I ventured gently to interpose.

‘So I gather,’ my wife answered with a profound accent of contempt. To her, anything that isn’t done in the purest English way stands, *ipso facto*, self-condemned immediately.

A day or two later a second letter arrived from Miss Easterbrook, in reply to one of Lucy’s, suggesting a rendezvous. I confess it drew up in my mind a somewhat painful picture. I began to believe my wife’s fears were in some ways well grounded.

‘Mrs. Lucy B. Hancock, London’ (as before).

‘Dear Madam,—I thank you for yours, and will meet you on the day and hour you mention at St. Pancras *dépôt*. You will know me when you see me, because I shall wear a dove-coloured dress, with bonnet to match, and a pair of grey spectacles.

‘Respectfully,

‘MELISSA P. EASTERBROOK.’

I laid it down and sighed. 'A New England schoolmarm!' I exclaimed with a groan. 'It sounds rather terrible. A dove-coloured dress, and a pair of grey spectacles! I fancy I can picture her to myself—a tall and bony person of a certain age, with corkscrew curls, who reads improving books, and has views of her own about the fulfilment of prophecy.'

But as my spirits went down, so Lucy's went up, like the old man and woman in the cottage weather-glass. 'That looks more promising,' she said. 'The spectacles are good. Perhaps after all dear Bernard may escape. I don't think he's at all the sort of person to be taken with a dove-coloured bonnet.'

For some days after Bernard came home from Cambridge we chaffed a good deal among ourselves about Miss Melissa Easterbrook. Bernard took quite my view about the spectacles and dress. He even drew on an envelope a fancy portrait of Miss Easterbrook, as he said himself, 'from documentary evidence.' It represented a typical schoolmarm of the most virulent order, and was calculated to strike terror into the receptive mind of ingenuous youth on simple inspection.

At last the day came when we were to go to Liverpool. We arrived at St. Pancras in very good time, and looked about on the platform for a tall and hard-faced person of Transatlantic aspect, arrayed in a dove-coloured dress and a pair of grey spectacles. But we looked in vain: nobody about seemed to answer to the description. At last Bernard turned to my wife with a curious smile. 'I think I've spotted her, mother,' he said, waving his hand vaguely to the right. 'That lady over yonder—by the door of the refreshment-room. Don't you see? That must be Melissa.' For we knew her only as Melissa already among ourselves: it had been raised to the mild rank of a family witticism.

I looked in the direction he suggested, and paused for certainty. There, irresolute by the door and gazing about her timidly with inquiring eyes, stood the prettiest, tiniest, most shrinking little Western girl you ever saw in your life—attired, as she said, in a dove-coloured dress, with bonnet to match, and a pair of grey spectacles. But oh, what a dove-coloured dress! Walter Crane might have designed it—one of those perfect travelling costumes of which the American girl seems to possess a monopoly; and the spectacles—well, the spectacles, though undoubtedly real, added just a touch of piquancy to an otherwise almost painfully timid and retiring little figure. The moment I

set eyes on Melissa Easterbrook, I will candidly admit, I was her captive at once ; and even Lucy, as she looked at her, relaxed her face involuntarily into a sympathetic smile. As a rule, Lucy might pose as a perfect model of the British matron in her ampler and maturer years—‘calmly terrible,’ as an American observer once described the genus : but at sight of Melissa she melted without a struggle. ‘Poor wee little thing, how pretty she is !’ she exclaimed with a start. You will readily admit that was a great deal, from Lucy.

Melissa came forward tentatively, a dainty blush half rising on her rather pale and delicate little cheek. ‘Mrs. Hancock ?’ she said in an inquiring tone, with just the faintest suspicion of an American accent in her musical small voice. Lucy took her hand cordially. ‘I was sure it was you, ma’am,’ Melissa went on with pretty confidence, looking up into her face, ‘because Mrs. Wade told me you’d be as kind to me as a mother ; and the moment I saw you I just said to myself, “That *must* be Mrs. Hancock : she’s so sweetly motherly.” How good of you to burden yourself with a stranger like me ! I hope indeed I won’t be too much trouble.’

That was the beginning. I may as well say, first as last, we were all of us taken by storm ‘right away’ by Melissa. Lucy herself struck her flag unconditionally before a single shot was fired, and Bernard and I, hard hit at all points, surrendered at discretion. She was the most charming little girl the human mind can conceive. Our cold English language fails, in its roughness, to describe her. She was *petite, mignonne*, graceful, fairy-like, yet with a touch of Yankee quaintness and a delicious *espèglerie* that made her absolutely unique in my experience of women. We had utterly lost our hearts to her before ever we reached Liverpool ; and, strange to say, I believe the one of us whose heart was most completely gone was, if only you’ll believe it, that calmly terrible Lucy.

Melissa’s most winning characteristic, however, as it seemed to me, was her perfect frankness. As we whirled along on our way across England, she told us everything about herself, her family, her friends, her neighbours, and the population of Kansas City in general. Not obtrusively or egotistically—of egotism Melissa would be wholly incapable—but in a certain timid, confiding, half-childlike way, as of the lost little girl, that was absolutely captivating. ‘Oh no, ma’am,’ she said, in answer to one of Lucy’s earliest questions, ‘I didn’t come over alone. I think

I'd be afraid to. I came with a whole squad of us who were doing Europe. A prominent lady in Kansas City took charge of the square lot. And I got as far as Rome with them, through Germany and Switzerland, and then my money wouldn't run to it any further: so I had to go back. Travelling comes high in Europe, what with hotels and fees and having to pay to get your baggage checked. And that's how I came to want an escort.'

Bernard smiled good-naturedly. 'Then you had only a fixed sum,' he asked, 'to make your European tour with?' *not much*

'That's so, sir,' Melissa answered, looking up at him quizzically through those pretty grey spectacles. 'I'd put away quite a little sum of my own to make this trip upon. It was my only chance of seeing Europe and improving myself a piece. I knew when I started I couldn't go all the round trip with the rest of my party: but I thought I'd set out with them, any way, and go ahead as long as my funds held out; and then when I was through I'd turn about and come home again.'

'But you put away the money yourself?' Lucy asked, with a little start of admiring surprise. *more, before not used to*

'Yes, ma'am,' Melissa answered sagely. 'I know it. I saved it.'

'From your allowance?' Lucy suggested, from the restricted horizon of her English point of view.

Melissa laughed a merry little laugh of amusement. 'Oh, no,' she said; 'from my salary.'

'From your salary!' Bernard put in, looking down at her with an inquiring glance.

'Yes, sir; that's it,' Melissa answered, all unabashed. 'You see, for four years I was a clerk in the Post Office.' She pronounced it 'clerk,' but that's a detail.

'Oh, indeed!' Bernard echoed. He was burning to know how, I could see, but politeness forbade him to press Melissa on so delicate a point any further.

Melissa, however, herself supplied at once the missing information. 'My father was postmaster in our city,' she said, simply, 'under the last administration—President Blanco's, you know—and he made me one of his clerks, of course, when he'd gotten the place; and as long as the fun went on, I saved all my salary for a tour in Europe.'

'And at the end of four years?' Lucy said. *before sending*

'Our party went out,' Melissa put in, confidentially. 'So, when the trouble began, my father was dismissed, and I had just enough left to take me as far as Rome, as I told you.'

I was obliged to explain parenthetically, to allay Lucy's wonderment, that in America the whole *personnel* of every local Government office changes almost completely with each incoming President.

'That's so, sir,' Melissa assented, with a wise little nod. 'And as I didn't think it likely our folks would get in again in a hurry —the country's had enough of us—I just thought I'd make the best of my money when I'd got it.'

'And you used it all up in giving yourself a holiday in Europe?' Lucy exclaimed, half reproachfully. To her economic British mind such an expenditure of capital seemed horribly wasteful.

'Yes, ma'am,' Melissa answered, all unconscious of the faint disapproval implied in Lucy's tone. 'You see, I'd never been anywhere much away from Kansas City before; and I thought this was a special opportunity to go abroad, and visit the picture-galleries and cathedrals of Europe, and enlarge my mind, and get a little culture. To us, a glimpse of Europe's an intellectual necessary.'

'Oh, then, you regarded your visit as largely educational?' Bernard put in, with increasing interest. Though he's a fellow and tutor of King's, I will readily admit that Bernard's personal tastes lie rather in the direction of rowing and football than of general culture; but still, the American girl's point of view decidedly attracted him by its novelty in a woman.

'That's so, sir,' Melissa answered once more, in her accustomed affirmative. 'I took it as a sort of university trip. I graduated in Europe. In America, of course, wherever you go, all you can see's everywhere just the same, purely new and American. The language, the manners, the type don't vary: in Europe, you cross a frontier or a ribbon of sea, and everything's different. Now, on this trip of ours, we went first to Chester, to glimpse a typical old English town—those Rows, oh! how lovely!—and then to Leamington, for Warwick Castle and Kenilworth. Kenilworth's just glorious, isn't it?—with its mouldering red walls and its dark green ivy, and the ghost of Amy Robsart walking up and down upon the close-shaven English grass-plots.'

'I've heard it's very beautiful,' Bernard admitted gravely.

'What! you live so close, and you've never *been* there!' Melissa exclaimed, in frank surprise.

Bernard allowed with a smile he had been so culpably negligent.

'And Stratford-on-Avon, too!' Melissa went on, enthusiast-

ically, her black eyes beaming. ‘Isn’t Stratford just charming! I don’t care for the interminable Shakespeare nuisance, you know—that’s all too new and made up; we could raise a Shakespeare house like that in Kansas City any day; but the church, and the elms, and the swans, and the river! I made such a sweet little sketch of them all, so soft and peaceful. At least, the place itself was as sweet as a corner of heaven, and I tried as well as I could in my way to sketch it.’

‘I suppose it *is* very pretty,’ Bernard replied, in a meditative tone.

Melissa started visibly. ‘What! have you never been there, either?’ she exclaimed, taken aback. ‘Well, that *is* odd, now! You live in England, and have never run over to Stratford-on-Avon! Why, you do surprise me! But, there! I suppose you English live in the midst of culture, as it were, and can get to it all right away at any time; so, perhaps, you don’t think quite as much of it as we do, who have to save up our money, perhaps for years, to get, for once in our lives, just a single passing glimpse of it. You live at Cambridge, you see; you must be steeped in culture, right down to the finger-ends.’

Bernard modestly responded, twirling his manly moustache, that the river and the running-ground, he feared, were more in his way than art or architecture.

‘And where else did you go besides England?’ Lucy asked really interested.

‘Well, ma’am, from London we went across by Ostend to Bruges, where I studied the Memlings, and made a few little copies from them,’ Melissa answered, with her sunny smile. ‘It’s such a quaint old place, Bruges. Life seems to flow as stagnant as its own canals. Have you ever been there?’

‘Oh, charming!’ Lucy answered; ‘most delightful and quiet. But—er—who are the Memlings? I don’t quite recollect them.’

Melissa gazed at her, open-eyed. ‘The Memlings?’ she said, slowly; ‘why, you’ve just missed the best thing at Bruges if you haven’t seen them. They’ve such a naïve charm of their own, so innocent and sympathetic. They’re in the Hôpital de St. Jean, you know, where Memling put them. And it’s so delightful to see great pictures like those—though they’re tiny little things to look at—in their native surroundings, exactly as they were first painted—the Chasse de Ste. Ursule, and all those other lovely things, so infantile in their simplicity, and yet so exquisitely graceful, and pure, and beautiful. I don’t know as I saw anything

in Europe to equal them for pathos in their own way—except, of course, the Fra Angelicos at San Marco in Florence.'

'I don't think I've seen them,' Lucy murmured, with an uncomfortable air. I could see it was just dawning upon her, in spite of her patronising, that this Yankee girl, with her imperfect command of the English tongue, knew a vast deal more about some things worth notice than she herself did. 'And where did you go then, dear?'

'Oh, from Bruges we went on to Ghent,' Melissa answered, leaning back, and looking as pretty as a picture herself in her sweet little travelling-dress, 'to see the great Van Eyck, the "Adoration of the Lamb," you know—that magnificent panel-picture. And then we went to Brussels, where we had Dierick Bouts and all the later Flemings; and to Antwerp, for Rubens and Vandyck and Quintin Matsys; and the Hague after that, for Rembrandt and Paul Potter; and Amsterdam in the end, for Van der Helst and Gerard Dow, and the late Dutch painters. So, you see, we had quite an artistic tour—we followed up the development of Netherlandish art, from beginning to end, in historical order. It was just delightful.'

'I went to Antwerp once,' Bernard put in, somewhat sheepishly, still twirling his moustache; 'but it was on my way to Switzerland; and I didn't see much, as far as I can recollect, except the cathedral and the quay and the hotel I was stopping at.'

'Ah, that's all very well for *you*,' Melissa answered, with a rather envious air. 'You can see these things any day. But for us, the chance comes only once in a lifetime, and we must make the most of it.'

Well, in such converse as this we reached Liverpool in due time, and went next morning on board our steamer. We had a lovely passage out, and all the way, the more we saw of Melissa, the more we liked her. To be sure, Lucy received a terrible shock the third day out, when she asked Melissa what she meant to do when she returned to Kansas City. 'You won't go into the Post Office again, I suppose, dear?' she said kindly, for we had got by that time on most friendly terms with our little Melissa.

'I guess not,' Melissa answered. 'No such luck any more. I'll have to go back again to the store as usual.'

'The store!' Lucy repeated, bewildered. 'I—I don't quite understand you.'

'Well, the shop, I presume you'd call it,' Melissa answered, smiling. 'My father's gotten a book-store in Kansas City; and

before I went into the Post Office I helped him at the counter. In fact, I was his saleswoman.'

'I assure you, Vernon,' Lucy remarked in our berth that night, 'if an Englishwoman had said it to me, I'd have been obliged to apologise to her for having forced her to confess it, and I don't know what way I should ever have looked to hide my face while she was talking about it. But with Melissa it's all so different, somehow. She spoke as if it was the most natural thing on earth for her father to keep a shop, and she didn't seem the least little bit in the world ashamed of it either.'

'Why should she?' I answered, with my masculine bluntness. But that was perhaps a trifle too advanced for Lucy. Melissa was exercising a widening influence on my wife's point of view with astonishing rapidity: but still, a perfect lady must always draw a line somewhere.

All the way across, indeed, Melissa's lively talk was a constant delight and pleasure to every one of us. She was so taking, that girl, so confidential, so friendly. We really loved her. Then her quaint little Americanisms were as pretty as herself—not only her 'Yes, sirs,' and her 'No, ma'ams,' her 'I guess' and 'That's so,' but her fresh Western ideas and her infinite play of fancy in the Queen's English. She turned it as a potter turns his clay. In Britain, our mother tongue has crystallised long since into set forms and phrases. In America, it has still the plasticity of youth; it is fertile in novelty—nay, even in surprises. And Melissa knew how to twist it deftly into unexpected quips and incongruous conjunctions. Her talk ran on like a limpid brook, with a musical ripple playing ever on the surface. As for Bernard, he helped her about the ship like a brother, as she moved lightly around with her sylphlike little form among the ropes and capstans. Melissa liked to be helped, she said: she didn't believe one bit in woman's rights; no, indeed—she was a great deal too fond of being taken care of for that. And who wouldn't take care of her, that delicate little thing, like some choice small masterpiece of cunning workmanship? Why, she almost looked as if she were made of Venetian glass, and a fall on deck would shatter her into a thousand fragments.

And her talk all the way was of the joys of Europe—the castles and abbeys she was leaving behind, the pictures and statues she had seen and admired, the pictures and statues she had left unvisited. 'Somebody told me in Paris,' she said to me one day, as she hung on my arm on deck and looked up into my

face confidently with that childlike smile of hers, 'the only happy time in an American woman's life is the period when she's just got over the first poignant regret at having left Europe, and hasn't yet reached the point when she makes up her mind that, come what will, she really *must* go back again. And I thought, for my part, then my happiness was fairly spoilt for life, for I shall never be able again to afford the journey.'

'Melissa, my child,' I said, looking down at those ripe rich lips, 'in this world one never knows what may turn up next. I've observed on my way down the path of life that when fruit hangs rosy-red on the tree by the wall, some passer-by or other is pretty sure in the end to pluck it.'

But that was too much for Melissa's American modesty. She looked down and blushed like a rose herself. But she answered me nothing.

A night or two before we reached New York I was standing in the gloom, half hidden by a boat on the davits amidships, enjoying my vespertinal cigar in the cool of evening; and between the puffs I caught from time to time stray snatches of a conversation going on softly in the twilight between Bernard and Melissa. I had noticed of late, indeed, that Bernard and Melissa walked much on deck in the evening together; but this particular evening they walked long and late, and their conversation seemed to me (if I might judge by fragments) particularly confidential. The bits of it I caught were mostly, it is true, on Melissa's part (when Bernard said anything, he said it lower). She was talking enthusiastically of Venice, Florence, Pisa, Rome, with occasional flying excursions into Switzerland and the Tyrol. Once as she passed I heard something murmured low about Botticelli's 'Primavera'; when next she went by, it was the Alps from Mürren; a third time, again, it was the mosaics at St. Mark's, and Titian's 'Assumption,' and the Doge's Palace. What so innocent as art, in the moonlight, on the ocean?

At last Bernard paused just opposite where I stood (for they didn't perceive me), and said very earnestly, 'Look here, Melissa,' —he had called her Melissa almost from the first moment, and she seemed to prefer it, it seemed so natural—'Look here, Melissa. Do you know, when you talk about things like that, you make me feel so dreadfully ashamed of myself.'

'Why so, Mr. Hancock?' Melissa asked innocently.

'Well, when I think what opportunities I've had, and how little I've used them,' Bernard exclaimed with vehemence, 'and

then reflect how few you've got, and how splendidly you've made the best of them, I just blush, I tell you, Melissa, for my own laziness.'

'Perhaps,' Melissa interposed with a grave little air, 'if one had always been brought up among it all, one wouldn't think quite so much of it. It's the novelty of antiquity that makes it so charming to people from my country. I suppose it seems quite natural, now, to you that your parish church should be six hundred years old, and have tombs in the chancel with Elizabethan ruffs or its floor inlaid with Plantagenet brasses. To us, all that seems mysterious and in a certain sort of way one might almost say magical. Nobody can love Europe quite so well, I'm sure, who has lived in it from a child. *You* grew up to many things that burst fresh upon us at last with all the intense delight of a new sensation.'

They stood still as they spoke and looked hard at one another. There was a minute's pause. Then Bernard began again. 'Melissa,' he faltered out, in a rather tremulous voice, 'are you sorry to go home again?'

'I just hate it!' Melissa answered with a vehement burst. Then she added after a second, 'But I've enjoyed the voyage.'

'You'd like to live in Europe?' Bernard asked.

'I should love it!' Melissa replied. 'I'm fond of my folks, of course, and I should be sorry to leave them; but I just love Europe. I shall never go again, though. I shall come right away back to Kansas City now, and keep store for father for the rest of my natural existence.'

'It seems hard,' Bernard went on, musing, 'that anybody like you, Melissa, with such a natural love of art and of all beautiful things—anybody who can draw such sweet dreams of delight as those heads you showed us after Filippo Lippi—anybody who can appreciate Florence and Venice and Rome as you do, should have to live all her life in a Far Western town, and meet with so little sympathy as you're likely to find there.'

'That's the rub,' Melissa replied, looking up into his face with such a confiding look (if any pretty girl had looked up at *me* like that, I should have known what to do with her; but Bernard was twenty-four, and young men are modest). 'That's the rub, Mr. Hancock. I like—well, European society so very much better. Our men are nice enough in their own way, don't you know; but they somehow lack polish—at least, out West, I mean—in Kansas City. Europeans mayn't be very much better

when you get right at them, perhaps ; but on the outside, any way, to *me*, they're more attractive somehow.'

There was another long pause, during which I felt as guilty as ever eavesdropper before me. Yet I was glued to the spot. I could hardly escape. At last Bernard spoke again. 'I should like to have gone round with you on your tour, Melissa,' he said ; 'I don't know Italy. I don't suppose by myself I could even appreciate it. But if *you* were by my side, you'd have taught me what it all meant ; and then I think I might perhaps understand it.'

Melissa drew a deep breath. 'I wish I could take it all over again,' she answered, half sighing. 'And I didn't see Naples, either. That was a great disappointment. I should like to have seen Naples, I must confess, so as to know I could at least in the end die happy.'

'Why do you go back?' Bernard asked, suddenly, with a bounce, looking down at that wee hand that trembled upon the taffrail.

'Because I can't help myself,' Melissa answered, in a quivering voice. 'I should like—I should like to live always in England.'

'Have you any special preference for any particular town?' Bernard asked, moving closer to her—though, to be sure, he was very, very near already.

'N—no ; n—none in particular,' Melissa stammered out faintly, half sidling away from him.

'Not Cambridge, for example?' Bernard asked, with a deep gulp and an audible effort.

I felt it would be unpardonable for me to hear any more. I had heard already many things not intended for me. I sneaked off, unperceived, and left those two alone to complete that conversation.

Half an hour later—it was a calm moonlight night—Bernard rushed down eagerly into the saloon to find us. 'Father and mother,' he said, with a burst, 'I want you up on deck for just ten minutes. There's something up there I should like so much to show you.'

'Not whales?' I asked hypocritically, suppressing a smile.

'No, not whales,' he replied ; 'something much more interesting.'

We followed him blindly, Lucy much in doubt what the thing might be, and I much in wonder, after Mrs. Wade's letter, how Lucy might take it.

At the top of the companion-ladder Melissa stood waiting

for us, demure but subdued, with a still timider look than ever upon that sweet shrinking small face of hers. Her heart beat hard, I could see by the movement of her bodice, and her breath came and went; but she stood there like a dove, in her dove-coloured travelling-dress.

'Mother,' Bernard began, 'Melissa's obliged to come back to America, don't you know, without having ever seen Naples. It seems a horrid shame she should miss seeing it. She hadn't money enough left, you recollect, to take her there.'

Lucy gazed at him, unsuspecting. 'It does seem a pity,' she answered, sympathetically. 'She'd enjoy it so much. I'm sorry she hasn't been able to carry out all her programme.'

'And, mother,' Bernard went on, his eyes fixed hard on hers, 'how awfully she'd be thrown away on Kansas City! I can't bear to think of her going back to "keep store" there.'

'For my part, I think it positively wicked,' Lucy answered with a smile, 'and I can't think what—well, people in England—are about to allow her to do it.'

I opened my eyes wide. Did Lucy know what she was saying? Or had Melissa, then, fascinated her—the arch little witch!—as she had fascinated the rest of us?

But Bernard, emboldened by this excellent opening, took Melissa by the hand, as if in due form to present her. 'Mother,' he said tenderly, leading the wee thing forward, 'and father, too; *this* is what I wanted to show you—the girl I'm engaged to!'

I paused and trembled. I waited for the thunderbolt. But no thunderbolt fell. On the contrary, Lucy stepped forward, and, under cover of the mast, caught Melissa in her arms and kissed her twice over. 'My dear child,' she cried, pressing her hard, 'my dear little daughter, I don't know which of you two I ought most to congratulate.'

'But I do,' Bernard murmured low. And, his father though I am, I murmured to myself, 'And so do I, also.'

'Then you're not ashamed of me, mother dear,' Melissa whispered, burying her dainty little head on Lucy's shoulder, 'because I kept store in Kansas City?'

Lucy rose above herself, in the excitement of the moment. 'My darling wee daughter,' she answered, kissing her tenderly again, 'it's Kansas City alone that ought to be ashamed of itself for putting *you* to keep store—such a sweet little gem as you are!'

## *The Garden.*

MY garden was lovely to see,  
 For all things fair,  
 Sweet flowers and blossoms rare,  
 I had planted there.  
 There were pinks and lilies and stocks,  
 Sweet grey and white stocks, and rose and rue,  
 And clematis white and blue,  
 And pansies and daisies and phlox.  
 And the lawn was trim, and the trees were shady,  
 And all things were ready to greet my lady  
 On the Life's-love-crowning day  
 When she should come  
 To her lover's home,  
 To give herself to me.

I saw the red of the roses—  
 The royal roses that bloomed for her sake :  
 ‘They shall lie,’ I said, ‘where my heart’s hopes lie :  
 They shall droop on her heart and die.’

I dreamed in the orchard-closes :  
 ‘Tis here we will walk in the July days,  
 When the paths and the lawn are ablaze ;  
 We will walk here, and look at our life’s great bliss,  
 And thank God for this.’

I leaned where the jasmine white  
 Wreathed all my window round :  
 Here we will lean,  
 I and my queen,  
 And look out on the broad moonlight :  
 For there shall be moonlight—bright—  
 On my wedding-night.

She never saw the flowers  
That were hers from their first sweet hours.  
The roses, the pinks, and the dark heartsease  
Died in my garden, ungathered, forlorn ;  
Only the jasmine, the lilies, the white, white rose,  
They were gathered—to honour and sorrow born.  
They lay round her, touched her close.  
The jasmine stars—white stars, that about our window  
their faint light shed,  
Lay round her head.  
And the white, white roses lay on her breast,  
And a long, white lily lay in her hand ;  
They lie by her—rest with her rest.  
But I, unhonoured, unblest—  
I stand outside,  
In the ruined garden solitude—  
Where she never stood—  
On the trim green sod  
Which she never trod ;  
And the red, red roses grow and blow,  
— As if anyone cared  
How they fared !  
And the gate of Eden is shut; and I stand  
And see the Angel with flaming sword—  
Life's pitiless Lord—  
And I know I never may pass—  
Alas ! alas !  
Oh Rose ! my rose !  
I never may reach the place where she grows,  
A rose in the garden of God.

E. NESBIT.

## Concerning the Cuckoo.

THE cuckoo has the distinction of being one of the best known and least understood of our British birds. If all the literature which this strange bird has inspired were collected together it would form a small library in itself. Yet there is scarcely a point in connection with its curious life-history which is not from time to time made the subject of question and even contradiction by competent observers. The brief, mysterious visits to our shores, the sudden appearance everywhere in the early spring, and disappearance equally sudden when the year has but reached its zenith, the shy and unsociable habits, and above all the legend which from time immemorial has attributed to the bird conduct both as a parent and a nestling so unnatural as to be almost without a parallel, all combine to give the cuckoo a place in popular imagination which no other bird can lay claim to.

When the month of April reaches its teens the cuckoo comes amongst us in the south of England. It goes north with the advancing year, and appears generally in Scotland about the beginning of May. One of the first things which attracts the attention of every observer of the habits of the bird is the manner in which it distributes itself over every variety of country in these annual invasions. Other migrants have their favourite haunts: the nightingale seeks the copses of the southern counties, the lark and plover the open moors, the swallow the pastures, open waters, and the haunts of men. The mud-flats, the deep woods, and the rocky places have each their special *habitues*. But the cuckoo is to be found nearly everywhere. It takes the woods of Hampshire as familiarly as the trim poplars of the Continent, and it spreads itself over hill, dale, and open country indiscriminately. The bird is common round the fringes of London, apparently because of the presence of the numerous thickets in which it delights; but it remains where trees and even hedgerows fail, for it may be seen in the bare mountain-limestone country, with not a bush in sight, flying familiarly from stone to stone and making the rocks echo with its well-known call.

The cuckoo cannot properly be viewed from one standpoint. All its habits form part of a single study. Even this apparently incidental question of wide distribution and adaptation to diverse localities is probably intimately associated with the other unusual habits of the bird, and must be considered in connection with them.

Of the actual existence of the most widely reputed habit of the cuckoo, that which has led to the popular estimation of the bird as a monster of treachery and immorality, there can now be no possible doubt. The tradition respecting it is of great antiquity; but, unlike most traditions in natural history, it has been for long supported by observations numerous and authentic enough to satisfy the most exacting. Where the cuckoo is plentiful almost any painstaking observer will be able to find for himself the intruder's egg in the nest of one or other of the species of birds commonly made use of. The mother has been caught by many observers in the very act of foisting her offspring on her neighbours, and the young bird has been followed in every step of its adventurous career from the egg to the adult. Nothing in fact has been left undone necessary to satisfy the utmost scruples of anyone gifted with that sceptical bias in these matters which the pursuit of science is supposed to demand.

The eggs of the cuckoo have been found in the nests of nearly every species of bird in Great Britain and the Continent suitable for its purpose. The nests principally made use of in England are those of the meadow-pipet, hedge-sparrow, and pied-wagtail. In certain districts where the reed-warbler is common the nest of this bird is a great favourite, and the same may be said of the redstart. Although the range of choice which the cuckoo exercises is very wide—Messrs. Sharpe and Dresser giving, for instance, a list of ninety-two species of European birds, including thirty-seven British species, whose nests are used—it is a noteworthy fact that the bird nearly always chooses a nest belonging to a species the natural food of which is suitable to her own young. The foster-parent is thus nearly always insectivorous, the nests of birds which feed on vegetable substances being rarely used. Even the best regulated instinct, of course, sometimes errs, and the cuckoo's is no exception to the rule, the unnatural parent sometimes providing foster-parents equally unnatural for her young by occasionally depositing her eggs in nests such as those of the wood-pigeon and house-sparrow. But the instinct which leads the bird to choose the right nest is well marked despite these occasional lapses, and we shall have a word to say directly as to the manner in which it

probably originated, in common with the cuckoo's other peculiar instincts.

Nothing connected with the cuckoo has given rise to so much discussion as the extraordinary character of its egg and the manner in which it is placed in the nest chosen to receive it. Everyone who has collected birds' eggs, or indulged in the juvenile habit of birds'-nesting, or who has even gone so far as to take an intelligent interest in the dozen of new-laids ordered from the grocer's, must have noticed one rudimentary fact respecting the eggs of birds. The eggs of each species have certain marked characteristics which distinguish them from those of other birds: the common fowl's egg is white, the duck's pale blue, the thrush's speckled green, the skylark's dark brown. The eggs of each kind of bird also vary but little in size. Now, strange to say, the cuckoo's egg is a marked exception to this almost invariable rule. The eggs of the cuckoo have no particular colour. They have been found green, grey, blue, grey-mottled, green-mottled, and pure white. Neither have they any particular size. They vary in the most puzzling fashion, from the size of a skylark's egg to almost that of a pigeon's. Few of the authorities on the subject can agree even as to what the average size should be. For instance, two of the best known, to whom I refer at random, state the size of the cuckoo's egg to be respectively  $\frac{3}{10}$  inch by  $\frac{4}{10}$  inch, and 1 inch to 1.8 inch by .75 inch to .61 inch—a sufficiently wide difference to almost suggest whether they are really speaking of the egg of the same bird.

Closely associated with this question of the unusual variation in the appearance and size of the cuckoo's egg is that of the character of the nest in which it is laid. Formerly, before the habits of the cuckoo had been made the subject of such close study, the prevailing idea was that the bird sought out a convenient nest, apparently at random, and laid an egg in it in the absence of the owner. More systematic observation has, however, revealed that the cuckoo's meanness has more method in it, and method too which is apparently most skilfully devised to attain certain ends. A great number of authentic observations, made in a variety of places, appear to have established it as a fact beyond doubt that the eggs of the cuckoo are as a rule deposited in the nests of birds whose eggs approximate both in size and appearance to the strange egg placed among them. The view previously held that the cuckoo actually laid her egg in the chosen nest has been considerably modified by observations both in this country and on

the Continent. It seems still probable that the cuckoo sometimes lays in the nest, particularly when it is open and conveniently situated, but the general habit of the bird would appear to be to first lay her egg on the ground and then to take it in her bill and deposit it in the selected nest.

This method of depositing the egg, taken in connection with the acknowledged fact of the variability of the cuckoo's eggs and their general approximation in appearance to the eggs with which they are placed, has led to the formulation of two theories on the subject, both of which are steadfastly held to by their advocates. According to the first view, the cuckoo, having chosen the nest in which she is about to lay, has the extraordinary power of being able to control at will the appearance of her egg. She is supposed to be influenced in some unknown way by the surroundings or the appearance of the eggs already in the nest, and to produce in consequence an egg resembling those of the foster-parent. The other theory credits the bird with scarcely less originality, though with more shrewdness. According to the second view, having laid an egg on the ground, she takes a kind of mental inventory of its appearance, and then proceeds to deposit it in the nest of the bird whose egg it resembles.

Without staying at this point to discuss these and other theories which have been put forward to account for the curious fact that there is usually a general resemblance between the cuckoo's egg and those of the widely different species of birds with which it is found, it may be mentioned that it is likely that the cuckoo often lays on the ground without the intention of placing the egg in any nest, and even possibly occasionally settles all question of its destination by quietly making a meal of it. The bird seems in some manner to have obtained the reputation of an egg-sucker, but whether on the strength of reliable evidence or not it seems hard to say. I recently caught a cuckoo in the act of laying on the ground in somewhat peculiar circumstances which have some bearing on this point. Returning across Wimbledon Common about dusk on June 12, 1890, on passing a thicket in one of the retired corners, I saw a cuckoo, which was calling, flying low and in a peculiar way over the bracken. I stopped and watched the bird, and saw it alight down suddenly out of sight in a meaningful way. Hastening up to the place, I came upon two cuckoos in a dry open space among the ferns, one of them apparently in the act of depositing an egg. Both birds flew awkwardly away on my approach, and I took possession of the egg, which was quite warm. Most careful search was made

all round the spot within a considerable radius, in the hope of discovering the nest of some small bird for which the egg might have been intended, but no nest of any kind was found. A point which, however, seems worthy of remark is that on afterwards returning to the spot where the egg was picked up I found the broken remains of a similar egg which had apparently been sucked. The conclusion which presented itself to my mind at the time was that the bird had not intended to deposit the egg in any nest. She had probably laid in the same spot before, and had either feasted on the first egg herself or had left it, and it had been found and sucked by some animal. The second egg would most probably have suffered the same fate.

It is somewhat strange to find that there is still a difference of opinion as regards the behaviour of the nestling cuckoo towards the young of its foster-parents. That the presence of the young bird is fatal to the other birds in the nest is universally conceded, but that the interloper actually and deliberately throws out the rightful owners of the nest, in order to monopolise the whole of the parental care, is still questioned by writers of authority. The presence in the nest of a bird so greedy as the young cuckoo, and usually so much bigger than its fellows, would, it is urged, in any case bring about the death of the latter, and without it being necessary to assume any *malice prepense* on the part of the young cuckoo. Even a writer of such weight as Mr. Seeböhm seems inclined to class the accounts of the young cuckoo's action towards its fellows in the same category with ghost stories.

There seem, however, to be no grounds of acquitting the bird of the charge of deliberately and intentionally causing the death of its fellow-nestlings. Not only is it certain that the young cuckoo ejects the other birds from the nest, but it would appear to be also true that several details of its anatomical structure, and even the temper and disposition of the bird during the first few days of its life, have been acquired for the special purpose of executing its murderous work as swiftly and efficiently as possible. Soon after the young cuckoo is hatched out it exhibits an extraordinarily irritable and restless disposition. It keeps on beating its stumps of wings, it tries to get underneath anything that may be placed in the nest, and as it grows older it will spar with its wings and peck at the finger if placed near it. Anyone may see by a simple experiment how the bird regards itself in relation to all comers. Not only will it put out the other occupants, but it will throw out pieces of wood, lumps of earth, the eggs of other birds, or anything of the kind which may be placed by the observer

in the nest. The other nestlings are usually disposed of at once—that is to say, during the first or second day—and any eggs that may still remain unhatched in the nest are put over the side at the same time. The young cuckoo is aided in its remarkable efforts by a curious depression on the back behind the shoulders, which is said to disappear as the bird grows and after it has ceased to be useful. It is asserted by Sharpe and Dresser that the restless habit also ceases after fourteen days.

The surprising and exceptional nature of this phenomenon, and in some measure also the difficulty of accepting the explanation usually given of the origin of the instinct in the young bird, must be held to account for the disposition shown to accept accounts of it with reserve. One of the most graphic sketches of the occurrence by an eye-witness is that in Mr. Gould's *Birds of Great Britain*. The account by Mrs. Blackburn, who watched the movements of the young cuckoo, is full of interest. The nest under observation was that of the common meadow-pipet, and it had at first two eggs in it besides that of the cuckoo. 'At one visit,' continues Mrs. Blackburn, 'the pipets were found to be hatched, but not the cuckoo. At the next visit, which was after an interval of forty-eight hours, we found the young cuckoo alone in the nest, and both the young pipets lying down the bank, about ten inches from the margin of the nest, but quite lively after being warmed in the hand. They were replaced in the nest beside the cuckoo, which struggled about until it got its back under one of them, when it climbed backwards directly up the open side of the nest, and hitched the pipet from its back on to the edge. It then stood quite upright on its legs, which were straddled wide apart, with the claws firmly fixed half-way down the inside of the nest, among the interlacing fibres of which the nest was woven, and, stretching its wings apart and backwards, it elbowed the pipet fairly over the margin so far that its struggles took it down the bank instead of back into the nest. After this the cuckoo stood a minute or two, feeling back with its wings, as if to make sure that the pipet was fairly overboard, and then subsided into the bottom of the nest.' The ejected bird was replaced, but on again visiting the nest on the following morning both pipets were found dead out of the nest. Mrs. Blackburn continues: 'The cuckoo was perfectly naked, without the vestige of a feather, or even a hint of future feathers; its eyes were not yet opened, and its neck seemed too weak to support the weight of its head. . . . The most singular thing of all was the direct purpose with which the blind little monster made for the open

side of the nest, the only part where it could throw its burthen down the bank. I think all the spectators felt the sort of horror and awe at the apparent inadequacy of the creature's intelligence to its acts that one might have felt at seeing a toothless hag raise a ghost by an incantation. It was horribly uncanny and gruesome!'

Another interesting and detailed account of the actions of a young cuckoo in a hedge-accentor's nest was recently given in the *Zoologist* by Mr. John Hancock, who watched the proceedings throughout. In the early morning of 28th June the nest contained the young cuckoo (which had been hatched the previous day), two young accentors, and two eggs. The cuckoo made its first attempt to put an egg out of the nest a few minutes after five o'clock by getting it on its back in a clumsy fashion, but it did not succeed in getting the egg high enough to roll it over the edge of the nest. At half-past ten it succeeded in putting it over the side in Mr. Hancock's presence. The cuckoo then fell back in the nest apparently exhausted, but in a very agitated state. For some time 'the two young accentors lay motionless at the bottom of the nest, while the cuckoo kept moving its wings like hands, as if to excite or stir up its companions into action. In about twenty-five minutes it made two desperate efforts to get one of the young accentors flung over the edge of the nest, but failed. Another unsuccessful struggle took place when the mother was on the edge of the nest. About eleven o'clock the first young accentor was put over the edge of the nest.' The second egg was put out at 1 P.M., and by 3.30 the other young accentor had followed, and the cuckoo was the sole occupant of the nest.

The number of the theories which have been put forward from time to time to account for the unusual habits of the cuckoo is legion. The instinct of the young bird is surprising enough in itself, but the disappearance of the parental feelings in the old bird, the habit of laying in the nests of other birds, the extraordinary variability of the eggs, and the undoubted existence of some connection between the appearance of the egg and the character of the nest in which it is placed appear to be quite as difficult to explain.

One of the theories respecting the cuckoo which has received general support is that the bird's parasitic habits are the natural result of the character of its food. This matter has an interesting aspect. Those who are familiar with the natural selection theories of Darwin, Wallace, and Lubbock will know that certain hairy caterpillars are supposed to have acquired their striking appearance as a protection from birds. Strange to say, however, it is

these caterpillars of the hairy kind, which other birds leave, which form the staple food of the cuckoo. The bird, by universal consent, is enormously greedy, and it devours great quantities of them. Now, it is pointed out that, as the supply of this food soon fails, the cuckoo is obliged to migrate so early that it would not have time to take upon itself the cares of maternity, and so it has acquired the convenient habit of placing its offspring out to nurse. Unfortunately, however, for this theory, there are several difficulties in the way of accepting it as it stands. The habit is said to be found in the Indian species, which do not migrate. The old birds leave us in July and August, but the young remain a month or six weeks longer; and if they can find food, why not the old birds?

Another theory which has its supporters is that the parasitic habit is the result of a peculiarity in the manner in which the cuckoo's eggs are laid. It is now well known that the bird does not deposit her eggs rapidly like most birds, but that an interval of four or five or even eight days intervenes between them. Hence it is said that the cuckoo evidently could not utilise a nest of her own, for the first eggs would be addled or hatched before the last were laid. There are difficulties in the way of this theory too. There are other birds who lay their eggs in the manner of the cuckoo, but without having acquired its parasitic habits. Irregularity in this respect exists doubtless to some extent in many kinds of birds, and in some to a considerable degree. Mr. Coues says of the American species (*Coccygus*) that the nests commonly contain young by the time the last egg is laid. The evidence would seem to suggest that this habit has been developed in the cuckoo rather as the result of its other habits than as the cause of them.

There is another theory which has received the adherence of many persons of weight. One of the strangest of many unusual facts regarding the cuckoo is the proportion of the sexes. The males greatly outnumber the females. The males have been estimated at ten to each female, and by some observers as high as fifteen to one; even the most moderate estimates do not place the proportion at less than five to one. The theorists who find in this fact the cause of the peculiar habits of the birds are, however, not agreed among themselves as to how it has operated. Some regard it as precluding the cuckoo from mating in the ordinary way, and so from building a nest and rearing her young. Others regard the temperament of the bird as a kind of physiological accompaniment of the relationship of the sexes, but on grounds which seem rather unsatisfactory, if not obscure.

There is no doubt that any satisfactory explanation of the unusual habits of the cuckoo must be sought for in the operation of natural selection. The great difficulty is, however, to find the key of the situation. Why has the cuckoo developed in a certain direction and become such an exception to other birds? Many of the peculiarities which observers have taken for causes are without doubt effects acquired after the bird had already made progress in a certain direction. But what has been the starting point, and where are we to find the cause which first led to the development of the bird along such a peculiar line?

The proper point at which to begin an inquiry of this nature would seem to be that to which all the theorists are willing to return. There can be no doubt that the cuckoo, like all parasites, at one time lived a respectable existence. The bird must at some time or other have built a nest and reared its own young. There are many recorded observations of the reversion of the bird at the present day to this long lost and aboriginal instinct of nidification. The cuckoo has been seen to sit on her own eggs on the ground, and she has been observed feeding her own young. It is even stated that she sometimes makes attempts at nest-building. Herr Adolph Müller has recently given an account of a case which he claims to have observed of a cuckoo hatching her own eggs. Comparing the cuckoo at the present day with other birds, nesting under normal conditions, we find the parasitic habit associated with three remarkable characteristics. There are: (1) the undoubted gluttony of the bird and the peculiarity of its food; (2) the great preponderance of males; and (3) the extraordinary habit of the young cuckoo in the nest. Any theory of the origin of the cuckoo's habits through natural selection should be able not only to account for the parasitic instinct, but to explain in what way these peculiarities are associated with this instinct and with each other.

The only other bird in which the cuckoo's habits are known to be developed to a considerable extent is the American cowbird. These birds exhibit in different degrees habits with regard to their eggs, varying from simple carelessness to the stage in which the parasitic habit is almost as well developed as in our own cuckoo. Some of the birds only show a disposition to lay their eggs carelessly about, occasionally dropping them in other birds' nests. In others the nest-building instinct has in great measure disappeared. The birds congregate together in flocks, they often lay their eggs in heaps, so that only a small proportion are hatched, and it is stated that the parents will assist indiscriminately in the task of hatching the eggs and feeding the young.

Lastly, in one species the cuckoo's habit is developed. A single egg is laid in the nests of other birds; the young stranger monopolises the attention of the foster-parent; and though it is said not to eject its fellow-nestlings, like the cuckoo, these generally come by their death in consequence of its presence. The one noteworthy peculiarity which the cow-bird is said to have besides in common with the cuckoo is its gluttony. The bird is generally spoken of as possessing an insatiable appetite.

Returning now to our own cuckoo; there is one peculiarity of the young bird which seems very significant. It appears open to question whether the true meaning of the habit of ejecting its fellows from the nest has not been overlooked by observers. That the young cuckoo could have acquired this habit, and even an anatomical structure suitable to it, merely in order to be able to turn out the weak and small fellow-nestlings with which it is usually associated seems hard to conceive. These would beyond doubt be either starved or smothered in any case (as the companions of the American cow-bird appear to be), and it seems hard to understand how natural selection could develop so deep-seated a change merely to obtain so small an advantage. The alternative conclusion is that the cuckoo must have developed this peculiarity under conditions different from those now existing.

We may be able to realise to some extent what the conditions must have been, under which the habit was at first developed, if we try to imagine for a moment what would happen if the cuckoo of the present day were to return to its aboriginal habits and endeavour to rear its own young. Two considerations immediately present themselves: A single pair would in the first place be quite unable to feed and rear an ordinary brood. In the second place, the young birds would not tolerate each other in the nest. There have been rare cases known where the cuckoo has deposited two eggs in the same nest, and one of the young birds has been known to eject the other after a prolonged struggle.

The cuckoo, whether from some change in environment, such as the disappearance of its natural food, or through some other cause, is evidently at the present time a bird which finds great difficulty in feeding itself. Each bird is said to have its own feeding grounds, which it defends against all comers, and the early migration, and the significant fact that the caterpillars which other birds reject form the staple food, all point to the conclusion that the cuckoo obtains sufficient food only with difficulty. Now it is not difficult to conceive what the effect

upon the young was when these conditions first arose and the cuckoo was still a normally nesting bird. The nesting period is the time when the demand for food is greatest, and the rivalry must immediately and in the first place have made itself felt among the young birds. The advantage must now have inevitably been with those birds which from generation to generation obtained the most food in the struggle which ever went on in the nest. This is where, in all probability, we must look for the origin at least in the young cuckoo of the habit of ejecting its fellows from the nest, and the development in the surviving birds, through the operation of natural selection, of the peculiar structure and temperament which accompanies it.

If we are right so far it is probable that we are now also in view of the explanation of the phenomenon of the great preponderance of males. It is a well-known fact that amongst most birds the males are always the stronger and more active in the nest. The advantage in such a struggle must always have been with the males, and the broods of which the greatest number survived were those of birds which produced the largest proportion of males. This selection may have continued after the cuckoo had acquired its parasitic habits. It would operate, it must be noticed, not simply by weeding out the females, but by selecting for survival the descendants of those cuckoos which produced a preponderance of males, and which would consequently transmit a similar tendency to their offspring. This tendency thus developed through an immense number of generations would inevitably become in course of time what we find it to be at the present day, the normal habit of the bird.

The origin of the parasitic habit of the cuckoo is less difficult to account for. We have here, in fact, only to follow in the main the explanation already suggested by Darwin, always remembering, however, that this habit is in itself probably but an incident in a peculiar course of development. The habit probably had its beginning in either one of two tendencies common among birds—viz., the inclination to steal from each other nest-building materials and the disposition to occasionally lay in each other's nests. Of the habit of stealing nest-building materials we have a familiar example in the rooks, and it is widely distributed among birds. The Baltimore oriole, a near relative of the American cow-bird, is described as being very active in appropriating materials collected by other birds. Some of the cow-birds either build a nest of their own or seize on one belonging to another bird, while in others, as already mentioned, the cuckoo's

habit is developed. On the other hand we have many familiar examples of the habit of occasionally laying in other nests, especially among the gallinaceous birds.

It is not difficult in either case to imagine how the present habit of the cuckoo was developed, doubtless by easy stages. If the cuckoo of the present day finds great difficulty in feeding itself during its stay with us, it was obviously a great advantage for the voracious young bird to be entrusted to the care of foster-parents. The young birds developing from eggs which chanced to be deposited in the nests of other birds, stood a much better chance of survival, and this chance was further increased when but a single egg was laid in each nest. From a small beginning the habit would, in fact, be developed and perfected by the operation of natural selection alone.

There remains to be mentioned what is perhaps the most interesting example of gradual adaptation of means to an end which the habits of the cuckoo afford. Many strange and ingenious theories, a few examples of which have been given, have been propounded to account for the instinct which apparently leads the cuckoo to deposit her eggs in nests containing others resembling them in appearance. As a matter of fact, however, we have here only another beautiful example of appropriate results produced by natural selection. The great variation in the cuckoo's eggs has been already referred to. Anyone who has ever placed, as I have done, a cuckoo's egg of the largest type in a nest with the eggs of one of the smaller birds utilised, could not help being struck with the incongruity of the appearance. There would be little doubt in his mind that if the cuckoo herself deposited her eggs thus unsuitably, they must often not be hatched out. That this happens sometimes at present is not unlikely; that it happened more often in the past there can be little doubt. Mr. Nuttall relates significant instances of the sagacity of the American summer-yellow bird in refusing to hatch the egg of the cow-bird placed among her own. The strange egg is sometimes broken, or, being too large for ejection, it is enclosed in the bottom of the nest and a new lining built over it, and the bird is even said to sometimes enclose with it in this manner her own eggs rather than hatch out that of the intruder. Some selection of this kind must undoubtedly have been going on in the case of the cuckoo's eggs for an immense period. The eggs which had most chance of being hatched out were doubtless always those most closely resembling the eggs of the foster-parent.

But now comes the most curious part. Natural selection it may be said has acted thus far, but how comes it that a particular cuckoo lays a certain type of egg in a particular nest? The answer is interesting. It has been noted by several observers that the same cuckoo lays eggs of the same type, and recent observations also establish a strong probability that each cuckoo generally lays in the nest of the same species of bird. Now both these peculiarities would in all probability be hereditary. The cuckoo, in fact, deposits her egg in a suitable nest, not from any extraordinary or mysterious instinct, but because the descendant of a bird reared, for instance, in a skylark's, from an egg resembling those of the foster-parent, would herself probably lay in a skylark's nest, and produce an egg of similar appearance. We appear to have here an exceedingly interesting state of things. Natural selection has, as it were, developed in individuals of the cuckoo tribe the tendency to produce certain varying types of eggs, and at one and the same time has also developed the tendency to deposit these eggs in the nest of the suitable species of bird. The great variation in size and appearance in the cuckoo eggs, therefore, simply roughly corresponds to the variation among the eggs of the numerous species of foster-parents made use of by the bird.

If the facts have justified us in regarding the cuckoo as a bird which experiences great difficulty in obtaining sufficient food, we appear to have, therefore, in the operation of natural selection alone, a sufficient explanation of the extraordinary series of habits and instincts which have rendered the bird remarkable from time immemorial. That the difficulty has been an increasing one from some distant time in the past the evidence seems to show; whether it still continues to increase, and whether we must regard the bird as travelling slowly on the down grade towards extinction, it would be more difficult to say. Some of the facts may appear to point to this conclusion. The wide distribution of the bird, the extraordinary limits which it reaches in its migrations (it is found from South Africa through the tropics, and as far north as the pines go in Europe), the short period over which its visits extend, the nature of its food, and the well-known gluttony and rivalry for the feeding-grounds are facts which, taken in connection with the parasitic habit, can at all events leave no doubt that the cuckoo of the present day maintains its position amid the competition of life only with extreme difficulty.

CANNOCK BRAND.

## *The Three Fates.<sup>1</sup>*

BY F. MARION CRAWFORD, AUTHOR OF 'MR. ISAACS,'  
'DR. CLAUDIUS,' &c.

### CHAPTER IV.

MANY days passed before George thought of renewing his visit to Washington Square, and during that time he was not even tempted to go and see Mrs. Trimm. If the truth were to be told, it might appear that the vision of the two young girls, which had kept George in company as he returned to his home, did not present itself again for a long time with any especial vividness. Possibly the surroundings and occupations in the midst of which he lived were not of a nature to stir his memories easily; possibly, too, and more probably, the first impression had lacked strength to fascinate his imagination for more than half an hour. The habit of reading a book, writing twenty lines of print about it and throwing it aside, never to be taken up again, may have its consequences in daily life. Though quite unconscious of taking such a superficial view of so serious a matter, George's mind treated the Misses Fearing very much as it would have treated a book that had been sent in for notice, dealt with and seen no more. Now and then, when he was not at work, and was even less interested than usual in his father's snatches of conversation, he was conscious of remembering his introduction to the two young ladies, and, strange to say, there was something humorous in the recollection. Totty's businesslike mode of procedure amused him, and what seemed to him her absurd assumption of a wild improbability. The ludicrous idea of the whole affair entertained his fancy for a few seconds before it slipped away again. He could not tell exactly where the source of his mirth was situated in the chain of ideas, but he almost smiled at the thought of the enormous, stiff easy-chairs, and of the bookcase in the corner,

<sup>1</sup> Copyright 1891, by F. Marion Crawford.

loaded to the highest shelf with histories bound in tree calf and gold. He remembered, too, the look of disappointment in Totty's eyes when he had alluded to the respectability of the furniture as they walked up Fifth Avenue.

Those thoughts did not altogether vanish without suggesting to George's inner sight the outlines of the girls' faces, and at the same time he had a faint memory of the sounds of their voices. It would not displease him to see and hear both again, but, on the other hand, a visit in the afternoon was an undertaking of some importance, a fact which cannot be realised by people who have spent their lives in society, and who go to see each other as a natural pastime, just as the solitary man takes up a book, or as the sailor who has nothing to do knots and splices odds and ends of rope. It is not only that the material preparations are irksome, and that it is a distinctly troublesome affair for the young literary drudge to make himself outwardly presentable; there is also the tiresome necessity of smoothing out the weary brain so that it may be capable of appreciating a set of unfamiliar impressions in which it anticipates no relaxation. Add to all this the leaven of shyness which so often belongs to young and sensitive natures, and the slight exertion necessary in such a case swells and rises till it seems to be an insurmountable barrier.

A day came, however, when George had nothing to do. It would be more accurate to say that on a particular afternoon, having finished one piece of work to his satisfaction, he did not feel inclined to begin another; for, among the many consequences of entering upon a literary life is the losing for ever of the feeling that at any moment there is nothing to be done. Let a writer work until his brain reels and his fingers can no longer hold the pen, he will nevertheless find it impossible to rest without imagining that he is being idle. He cannot escape from the devil that drives him, because he is himself the driver and the driven, the fiend and his victim, the torturer and the tortured. Let physicians rail at the horrible consequences of drink, of excessive smoking, of opium, of chloral, and of morphine—the most terrible of all stimulants is ink, the hardest of taskmasters, the most fascinating of enchanters, the breeder of the sweetest dreams and of the most appalling nightmares, the most insinuating of poisons, the surest of destroyers. One may truly venture to say that of an equal number of opium-eaters and professional writers, the opium-eaters have the best of it in the matter of long life, health, and peace of mind. We all hear of the

miserable end of the poor wretch who has subsisted for years upon stimulants or narcotics, and whose death, often at an advanced age, is held up as a warning to youth; but who ever knows or speaks of the countless deaths due solely to the over-use of pen, ink, and paper? Who catalogues the names of those many whose brains give way before their bodies are worn out? Who counts the suicides brought about by failure, the cases of men starving because they would rather write bad English than do good work of any other sort? In proportion to the whole literary profession of the modern world the deaths alone, without counting other accidents, are more numerous than those caused by alcohol among drinkers, by nicotine among smokers, and by morphine and like drugs among those who use them. For one man who succeeds in literature a thousand fail, and a hundred, who have looked upon the ink when it was black and cannot be warned from it, and whose nostrils have smelled the printer's sacrifice, are ruined for all usefulness and go drifting and struggling down the stream of failure till death or madness put an end to their sufferings. And yet no one ventures to call writing a destroying vice, nor to condemn poor scribblers as 'ink-drunkards.'

George walked the whole distance from his house to Washington Square. He had not been in that part of the city since he had come with his cousin to make his first visit, but as he drew near to his destination he began to regret that he allowed more than a fortnight to pass without making any attempt to see his new acquaintances. On reaching the house he found that Constance Fearing was at home. He was sorry not to see the younger sister, with whom he had found conversation more easy and sympathetic. On the other hand, the atmosphere of the house seemed less stiff and formal than on the first occasion; the disposition of the heavy furniture had been changed, there were flowers in the old-fashioned vases, and there were more books and small objects scattered upon the tables.

'I was afraid you were never coming again!' exclaimed the young girl, holding out her hand.

There was something simple and frank about her manner which put George at his ease.

'You are very kind,' he answered. 'I was afraid that even to-day might be too soon. But Sherry Trimm says that when he is in doubt he plays trumps—and so I came.'

'Not at all too soon,' suggested Constance.

'The calculation is very simple. A visit once a fortnight

would make twenty-six visits a year with a fraction more in leap year, would it not? Does not that appal you?

'I have not a mathematical mind, and I do not look so far ahead. Besides, if we are away for six months in the summer, you would not make so many.'

'I forgot that everybody does not stay in town the whole year. I suppose you will go abroad again.'

'Not this year,' answered Miss Fearing rather sadly.

George glanced at her face and then looked quickly away. He understood her tone, and it seemed natural enough that the fresh recollection of her mother's death should for some time prevent both the sisters from returning to Europe. He could not help wondering how much real sorrow lay behind the young girl's sadness, though he was somewhat astonished to find himself engaged in such an odd psychological calculation. He did not readily believe evil of anyone, and yet he found it hard to believe much absolute good. Possibly he may have inherited something of this untrustfulness from his father, and there was a side in his own character which abhorred it. For a few moments there was silence between the two. George sitting in his upright chair and bending forward, gazing stupidly at his own hands clasped upon his knee, while Constance Fearing leaned far back in her deep easy-chair watching his dark profile against the bright light of the window.

'Do you like people, Miss Fearing?' George asked rather suddenly.

'How do you mean?'

'I mean, is your first impulse, about people you meet for the first time, to trust them, or not?'

'That is not an easy question to answer. I do not think I have thought much about it. What is your own impulse?'

'You are distrustful,' said George in a tone of conviction.

'Why?'

'Because you answer a question by a question.'

'Is that a sign? How careful one should be! No—I will try to answer fairly. I think I am unprejudiced, but I like to look at people's faces before I make up my mind about them.'

'And when you have decided, do you change easily? Have you not a decided first impression to which you come back in spite of your judgment, and in spite of yourself?'

'I do not know. I fancy not. I think I would rather not have anything of the kind. Why do you ask?'

‘Out of curiosity. I am not ashamed of being curious. Have you ever tried to think what the world would be like if nobody asked questions?’

‘It would be a very quiet place.’

‘We should all be asleep. Curiosity is only the waking state of the mind. We are all asking questions, all the time, either of ourselves, of our friends, or of our books. Nine-tenths of them are never answered, but that does not prevent us from asking more.’

‘Or from repeating the same ones—to ourselves,’ said Constance.

‘Yes; the most interesting ones.’

‘What is most interesting?’

‘Always that which we hope the most and the least expect to have,’ George answered. ‘We are talking psychology or something very like it,’ he added with a dry laugh.

‘Is there any reason why we should not?’ asked his companion. ‘Why do you laugh, Mr. Wood? Your laugh does not sound very heartfelt either.’ She fixed her clear blue eyes on him for a moment.

‘One rarely does well what one has not practised before an audience,’ he answered. ‘As you suggest, there is no reason why we should not talk psychology—if we know enough about it—that is to say, if you do, for I am sure I do not. There is no subject on which it is so easy to make smart remarks.’

‘Excepting our neighbours,’ observed Constance.

‘I have no neighbours. Who is my neighbour?’ asked George rather viciously.

‘I think there is a biblical answer to that question.’

‘But I do not live in biblical times; and I suppose my scratches are too insignificant to attract the attention of any passing Samaritan.’

‘Perhaps you have none at all.’

‘Perhaps not. I suppose our neighbours are “them that we love that love us,” so the old toast says. Are they not?’

‘And those whom we ought to love, I fancy,’ suggested Constance.

‘But we ought to love our enemies. What a neighbourly world it is, and how full of love it should be!’

‘Fortunately, “love” is a vague word.’

‘Have you never tried to define it?’ asked the young man.

‘I am not clever enough for that. Perhaps you could.’

George looked quickly at the young girl. He was not prepared to believe that she made the suggestion out of coquetry, but he was not old enough to understand that such a remark might have escaped from her lips without the slightest intention.

'I rather think that definition ends when love begins,' he said, after a moment's pause. 'All love is experimental, and definition is generally the result of many experiments.'

'Experimental?'

'Yes. Do you not know many cases in which people have tried the experiment and have failed? It is no less an experiment if it happen to succeed. Affection is a matter of fact, but love is a matter of speculation.'

'I should not think that experimental love would be worth much,' said Constance, with a shade of embarrassment. A very faint colour rose in her cheeks as she spoke.

'One should have tried it before one should judge. Or else, one should begin at the other extremity and work backwards from hate to love, through the circle of one's acquaintances.'

'Why are you always alluding to hating people?' asked the young girl, turning her eyes upon him with a look of gentle, surprised protest. 'Is it for the sake of seeming cynical, or for the sake of making paradoxes? It is not really possible that you should hate everyone, you know.'

'With a few brilliant exceptions, you are quite right,' George answered. 'But I was hoping to discover that you hated some one, for the sake of observing your symptoms. You look so very good.'

It would have been hard to say that the expression of his face had changed, but as he made the last remark the lines that naturally gave his mouth a scornful look were unusually apparent. The colour appeared again in Constance's cheeks, a little brighter than before, and her eyes glistened as she looked away from her visitor.

'I think you might find that appearances are deceptive if you go on,' she said.

'Should I?' asked George quietly, his features relaxing in a singularly attractive smile which was rarely seen upon his face. He was conscious of a thrill of intense satisfaction at the manifestation of the young girl's sensitiveness, a satisfaction which he could not then explain, but which was in reality highly artistic. The sensation could only be compared to that produced in an

appreciative ear by a new and perfectly harmonious modulation sounded upon a very beautiful instrument.

‘I wonder,’ he resumed presently, ‘what form the opposite of goodness would take in you? Are you ever very angry? Perhaps it is rude to ask such questions. Is it?’

‘I do not know. No one was ever rude to me,’ Constance answered calmly. ‘But I have been angry—since you ask—I often am, about little things.’

‘And are you very fierce and terrible on those occasions?’

‘Very terrible indeed,’ laughed the young girl. ‘I should frighten you if you were to see me.’

‘I can well believe that. I am of a timid disposition.’

‘Are you? You do not look like it. I shall ask Mrs. Trimm if it is true. By-the-bye, have you seen her to-day?’

‘Not since we were here together.’

‘I thought you saw her very often. I had a note from her yesterday. I suppose you know?’

‘I know nothing. What is it?’

‘Old Mr. Craik is very ill—dying, they say. She wrote to tell me so, explaining why she had not been here.’

George’s eyes suddenly gleamed with a disagreeable light. The news was as unexpected as it was agreeable. Not, indeed, that George could ever hope to profit in any way by the old man’s death; for he was naturally so generous that, if such a prospect had existed, he would have been the last to rejoice in its realisation. He hated Thomas Craik with an honest and disinterested hatred, and the idea the world was to be rid of him at last was inexpressibly delightful.

‘He is dying, is he?’ he asked in a constrained voice.

‘You seem glad to hear it,’ said Constance, looking at him with some curiosity.

‘I? Yes—well, I am not exactly sorry!’ His laugh was harsh and unreal. ‘You could hardly expect me to shed tears—that is, if you know anything of my father’s misfortunes.’

‘Yes, I have heard something. But I am sorry that I was the person to give you the news.’

‘Why, I am grateful to you.’

‘I know you are, and that is precisely what I do not like. I do not expect you to be grieved, but I do not like to see one man so elated over the news of another man’s danger.’

‘Why not say, his death?’ exclaimed George.

Constance was silent for a moment, and then looked at him as she spoke.

‘I hardly know you, Mr. Wood. This is only the second time I have seen you, and I have no right to make remarks about your character. But I cannot help thinking—that—’

She hesitated, not as though from any embarrassment, but as if she could not find the words she wanted. George made no attempt to help her, though he knew perfectly well what she wanted to say. He waited coldly to see whether she could complete her sentence.

‘You ought not to think such things,’ she said suddenly; ‘and if you do, you ought not to show it.’

‘In other words, you wish me to reform either my character or my manners, or both. Do you know that old Tom Craik ruined my father? Do you know that after he had done that he let my father’s reputation suffer, though my father was as honest as the daylight and he himself was the thief? That sounds very dramatic and theatrical, does it not? It is all very true nevertheless. And yet, you expect me to be such a clever actor as not to show my satisfaction at your news. All I can say, Miss Fearing, is that you expect a great deal of human nature, and that I am very sorry to be the particular individual who is fated to disappoint your expectations.’

‘Of course you feel strongly about it—I did not know all you have just told me, or I would not have spoken. I wish everyone could forgive—it is so right to forgive.’

‘Yes—undoubtedly,’ assented George. ‘Begin by forgiving me, please, and then tell me what is the matter with the worthy Mr. Craik.’

‘Mrs. Trimm seems to think it is nervous prostration—what everybody has nowadays.’

‘Is she very much cut up?’ George asked with an air of concern.

‘She writes that she does not leave him.’

‘Nor will—until—’ George stopped short.

‘What were you going to say?’

‘I was going to make a remark about the human will in general and about the wills of dying men in particular. It was very ill-natured, and in direct contradiction to your orders.’

‘I suppose she will have all his fortune in any case,’ observed Constance, repressing a smile, as though she felt that it would not suit the tone she had taken before.

‘Since you make so worldly an inquiry, I presume we may take it for granted that the mantle of Mr. Craik’s filthy lucre will descend upon the unwilling shoulders of Mrs. Sherrington Trimm. To be plain, Totty will get the dollars. Well—I wish her joy. She is not acquainted with poverty as it is, nor was destitution ever her familiar friend.’

‘Why do you affect that biblical sort of language?’

‘It seems to me more forcible than swearing. Besides, you would not let me swear, I am sure, even if I wanted to.’

‘Certainly not——’

‘Very well, then you must forgive the imperfections of my style in consideration of my not doing very much worse. I think I will go and ask how Mr. Craik is doing to-day. Would not that show a proper spirit of charity and forgiveness?’

‘I hope you will do nothing of the sort!’ exclaimed Constance hastily.

‘Would it not be a proof that I had profited by your instruction?’

‘I think it would be very hypocritical, and not at all nice.’

‘Do you? It seems to me that it would only look civil——’

‘From what you told me, civility can hardly be expected from you in this case.’

‘I am not obliged to tell the servant at the door the motive of my curiosity when I inquire after the health of a dying relation. That would be asking too much.’

‘You can inquire just as well at Mrs. Trimm’s——’

‘Mr. Craik’s house is on my way home from here—Totty’s is not on the direct line.’

‘I hope you—how absurd of me though! It is no business of mine.’

George could not say anything in reply to this statement, but an expression of amusement came over his face which did not escape his companion. Constance laughed a little nervously.

‘You are obliged to admit that it is nothing of my business, you see,’ she said.

‘I am in the position of a man who cannot assent without being rude, nor differ without impugning the known truth.’

‘That was very well done, Mr. Wood,’ said Constance. ‘I have nothing more to say.’

‘To me? Then I herewith most humbly take my leave.’ George rose from his seat.

'I did not mean that!' exclaimed the young girl with a smile.  
'Do not go—'

'It is growing late, and Mr. Craik may be gathered to his fathers before I can ring at his door and ask how he is.'

'Oh, please do not talk any more about that poor man!'

'If I stay here I shall. May I come again some day, Miss Fearing? You bear me no malice for being afflicted with so much original sin?'

'Its originality almost makes it pardonable. Come whenever you please. We shall always be glad to see you, and I hope that my sister will be here the next time.'

George vaguely hoped that she would not as he bowed and left the room. He had enjoyed the visit far more than Constance had, for whereas his conversation had somewhat disquieted her sensitive feeling of fitness, hers had afforded him a series of novel and delightful sensations. He was conscious of a new interest, of a new train of thought, and especially of an odd and inexplicable sense of physical comfort that seemed to proceed from the region of the heart, as though his body had been cheered, his blood warmed, and his circulation stimulated by the assimilation of many good things. As he walked up the Avenue, he did not ask himself whether he had produced a good or a bad impression upon Miss Fearing, nor whether he had talked well or ill, still less whether the young girl had liked him, though it is probable that if he had put any of these questions to his inner consciousness that complacent witness would, in his present mood, have answered all his inquiries in the way most satisfactory to his vanity. For some reason or other he was not curious to know what his inner consciousness thought of the matter. For the moment sensation was enough, and he was surprised to discover that sensation could be so agreeable. He knew that he was holding his head higher than usual, that his glance was more confident than it was wont to be, and his step more elastic, but he did not connect any of these phenomena in a direct way with his visit in Washington Square. Perhaps there was a vague notion afloat in his brain to the effect that if he once allowed the connection he should be forced into calling himself a fool, and that it was consequently far wiser to enjoy the state in which he found himself than to inquire too closely into its immediate or remote causes.

It is also probable that if George Wood's condition of general satisfaction on that evening had been more clearly dependent upon his recollection of the young lady he had just left, he would

have felt an impulse to please her by doing as she wished; in other words, he would have gone home or would have passed by Totty's house to make inquiries, instead of executing his purpose of ringing at Mr. Craik's door. But there was something contradictory in his nature, which drove him to do the very things which most men would have left undone; and, moreover, there was a grain of grim humour in the idea of asking in person after Tom Craik's health which made the plan irresistibly attractive. He imagined his own expression when he should tell his father what he had done, and he knew the old gentleman well enough to guess that the satire of the proceeding would inwardly please him in spite of himself, though he would certainly look grave and shake his head when he heard the story.

Constance Fearing's meditations, when she was left alone, were of a very different character. She stood for a long time at the window looking out into the purple haze that hung about the square, and then she turned and went and sat before the fire, and gazed at the glowing coals. George Wood could not but have felt flattered had he known that he was the subject of her thoughts during the greater part of an hour after his departure, and he would have been very much surprised at his own ignorance of human nature had he guessed that her mind was disturbed by the remembrance of her own conduct. He would assuredly have called her morbid and have doubted the sincerity of her most sacred convictions, and if he could have looked into her mind, that part of his history which was destined to be connected with hers would in all likelihood have remained unenacted. He could certainly not have understood her mood at that time, and the attempt to do so would have filled him with most unreasonable prejudices against her.

To the young girl it seemed indeed a very serious matter to have criticised George's conduct and to have thrust her advice upon him. It was the first time she had ever done such a thing, and she wondered at her own boldness. She repeated to herself that it was none of her business to consider what George Wood did, and still less to sit in judgment upon his thoughts, and yet she was glad that she had spoken as she had. She knew very little about men, and she was willing to believe they might all think alike. At all events, this particular man had very good cause for resentment against Thomas Craik. Nevertheless there was something in his evident delight at the prospect of the old man's death that was revolting to her finest feelings. Absolutely

ignorant of the world's real evil, she saw her own path beset with imaginary sins of the most varied description, to avoid committing which needed the constant wakefulness of a delicate sensibility; and as she knew of no greater or more real evils, she fancied that the lives of others must be like her own—a labyrinth of transparent cobwebs, to brush against one of which, even inadvertently, was but a little removed from crime itself. Her education had been so strongly influenced by religion and her natural sensitiveness was so great, that the main object of life presented itself to her as the necessity for discovering an absolute right or wrong in the most minute action, and the least relaxation of this constant watch appeared to her to be indicative of moral sloth. The fact that, with such a disposition she was not an intolerable nuisance to all who knew her, was due to her innate tact and good taste, and in some measure to her youth, which lent its freshness and innocence to all she did and thought and said. At the present time her conscience seemed to be more than usually active and dissatisfied. She assuredly did not believe that it was her mission to reform George Wood, or to decorate his somewhat peculiar character with religious arabesques of faith, hope, and charity; but it is equally certain that she felt an unaccountable interest in his conduct, and a degree of curiosity in his actions which, considering how slightly she knew him, was little short of amazing. Had she been an older woman, less religious and more aware of her own instincts, she would have asked herself whether she was not already beginning to care for George Wood himself rather than for the blameless rectitude of her own moral feelings. But with her the refinements of a girlish religiousness had so far got the upper hand of everything else that she attributed her uneasiness to the doubt about her own conduct rather than to a secret attraction which was even then beginning to exercise its influence over her.

It was to be foreseen that Constance Fearing would not fall in love easily, even under the most favourable circumstances. The most innocent love in the world often finds a barrier in the species of religious sentimentality by which she was at that time dominated, for morbid scruples have power to kill spontaneity and all that is spontaneous, among which things love is first, or should be. Constance was not like her sister Grace, who had loved John Bond ever since they had been children, and who meant to marry him as soon as possible. Her colder temperament would lose time in calculating for the future instead of

allowing her to be happy in the present. Deep in her heart, too, there lay a seed of unhappiness, the habit of doubting, which had grown out of her mistrust of her own motives. She was very rich. Should a poor suitor present himself, could she help fearing lest he loved her money, when she could hardly find faith in herself for the integrity of her own most trivial intentions? She never thought of Grace without admiring her absolute trust in the man she loved.

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## CHAPTER V.

THOMAS CRAIK lay ill in his great house, listening for the failing beatings of his heart as the last glow of the February afternoon faded out of the curtains and withdrew its rich colour from the carved panels on the walls. He lay upon his pillows, an emaciated old man with a waxen face and head, sunken eyes that seemed to have no sight in them. Short locks of yellowish-grey hair strayed about his forehead and temples, like dry grasses scattered over a skull. There was no beard upon his face, and the hard old lips were tightly drawn in a set expression, a little apart, so that the black shadow of the open mouth was visible between them. The long nervous hands lay upon the counterpane together, the fingers of the one upon the wrist of the other feeling the sinking pulse, searching with their numbed extremities for a little flutter of motion in the dry veins. Thomas Craik lay motionless in his bed, not one outward sign betraying the tremendous conflict that was taking place in his still active brain. He was himself to the last, such as he had always been in the great moments of his life, apparently cool and collected, in reality filled with the struggle of strong opposing passions.

He was not alone. Two physicians were standing in silence, side by side, before the chimney-piece, beneath which a soft fire of dry wood was burning steadily with a low and unvarying musical roar. An attendant sat upright upon a carved chair at the foot of the bed, not taking his eyes from the sick man's face.

The room was large and magnificent in its furniture and appointments. The high wainscot had been carved in rare woods after the designs of a great French artist. The walls above were covered with matchless Cordova leather from an Italian palace. The ceiling was composed of rich panels that surrounded a broad

canvas from the hand of a famous Spanish master, dead long ago. The chimney-piece was enriched with old brass work from Cairo, and with exquisite tiles from Turkish mosques. Priceless Eastern carpets, of which not one was younger than the century, covered the inlaid wooden floor. Diana of Poitiers had slept beneath the canopy of the princely bedstead ; it was said that Lewis the Fourteenth had eaten off the table that was placed beside it, and Benvenuto Cellini had carved the silver bell which stood within reach of the patient's hand. There was incongruity in the assemblage of different objects, but the great value of each and all saved the effect from vulgarity, and lent to the whole something of the odd harmony peculiar to certain collections.

It was the opinion of the two doctors that Tom Craik was dying. They had done what they could for him and were waiting for the end. As to his malady, it was sufficiently clear to both of them that his vitality was exhausted, and that even if he survived this crisis he could not have long to live. They agreed that the action of the heart had been much impaired by a life of constant excitement, and that the nerves had lost their elasticity. They had taken pains to explain to his sister, Mrs. Sherrington Trimm, that there was very little to be done and that the patient should be advised to make his last dispositions, since a little fatigue more or less could make no material difference in his state, whereas he would probably die more easily if his mind were free from anxiety. Totty had spent the day in the house and intended to return in the evening. She bore up very well under the trial, and the physicians felt obliged to restrain her constant activity in tending her brother while she was in the room, as it seemed to make him nervous and irritable. She had their fullest sympathy, of course, as persons who are supposed to be sole legatees of the dying very generally have ; but, so far as their professional capacity was concerned, the two felt that it went better with the patient when his faithful sister was out of the house.

From time to time inquiries were made on the part of acquaintances, generally through their servants, but they were not many. Though the other persons in the room scarcely heard the distant ringing of the muffled bell and the careful opening and shutting of the street door, the feeble old man never failed to catch the sound of both, and either with his eyes or half-uttered words asked who had called. On receiving the answer he generally moved his head a little wearily and his lids drooped again.

'Is there anybody you expect ? Anybody you wish to see ?'

one of the physicians once asked, bending low and speaking softly. He suspected that something was disquieting the dying man's mind.

But there was no answer, and the lids dropped again. It was now dusk and it would soon be night. Many hours might pass before the end came, and the doctors consulted in low tones as to which of them should remain. Just then the faint and distant rattle of the bell was heard. Immediately Tom Craik stirred, and seemed to be listening attentively. The two men ceased speaking, and they could hear the front door softly open in the street below, and close again a few seconds later. One of the physicians glanced at the patient, saw the usual look of inquiry in his face and quickly left the room. When he returned he held a card in his hand, which he took to the bedside after looking at it by the fireside. Bending down, he spoke in a low tone :

'Mr. George Winton Wood has called,' he said.

Tom Craik's sunken eyes opened suddenly and fixed themselves on the speaker's face.

'Any message?' he asked very feebly.

'He said he had only just heard of your illness, and was very sorry—would call again.'

A strange look of satisfaction came into the old man's colourless face, and a low sigh escaped his lips as he closed his eyes again.

'Would you like to see him?' inquired the doctor.

The patient shook his head without raising his lids, and the room was still once more. Presently the other physician departed, and the one who was left installed himself in a comfortable chair from which he could see the bed and the door. During half an hour no sound was heard save the muffled roar of the wood fire. At last the sick man stirred again.

'Doctor—come here,' he said in a harsh whisper.

'What is it, Mr. Craik?'

'Send for Trimm at once.'

'Mrs. Trimm, did you say?'

'No—Sherry Trimm himself—make my will—see? Quick.'

The physician stared at his patient for a moment in very considerable surprise, for he thought he had reason to suppose that Thomas Craik's will had been made already, and now he half suspected that the old man's mind was wandering. He hesitated.

'You think I'm not able, do you?' asked Craik, his rough

whisper rising to a growl. 'Well, I am. I'm not dead yet, so get him quickly.'

The doctor left the room without further delay, to give the necessary orders. When he returned, Mr. Craik was lying with his eyes wide open, staring at the fire.

'Give me something, can't you?' he said with more energy than he had shown that day.

The doctor began to think that it was not yet all up with his patient, as he mixed something in a glass and gave it to him. Craik drank eagerly and moved his stiffened lips afterwards as though he had enjoyed the taste of the drink.

'I may not jockey the undertaker,' he grumbled, 'but I shall last till morning, anyhow.'

Nearly half an hour elapsed before Sherrington Trimm reached the house, but during all that time Thomas Craik did not close his eyes again. His face looked less waxen too, and his sight seemed to have recovered some of the light that had been fading out of it by degrees all day. The doctor watched him with interest, wondering, as doctors must often wonder, what was passing in his brain, what last, unspent remnant of life's passions had caused so sudden a revival of his energy, and whether this manifestation of strength were the last flare of the dying lamp, or whether Tom Craik, to use his own words, would jockey the undertaker, as he had jockied many another adversary in his stirring existence.

The door opened, and Sherrington Trimm entered the room. He was a short, active man, slightly inclined to be stout, bald and very full about the chin and neck, with sharp, movable blue eyes, and a closely cut, grizzled moustache. His hands were plump, white and pointed, his feet were diminutive and his dress was irreproachable. He had a habit of turning his head quickly to the right and left when he spoke, as though challenging contradiction. He came briskly to the bedside and took one of Craik's wasted hands in his, with a look of honest sympathy.

'How are you, Tom?' he inquired, suppressing his cheerful voice to a sort of subdued chirp.

'According to him,' growled Craik, glancing at the doctor, 'I believe I died this afternoon. However, I want to make my will, so get out your tools, Sherry, and set to. Please leave us alone,' he added, looking up at the physician.

The latter went out, taking the attendant with him.

‘Your will!’ exclaimed Sherry Trimm when the door had closed behind the two. ‘I thought—’

‘Bad habit, thinking things. Don’t. Put that drink where I can reach it—so. There’s paper on the table. Sit down.’

Trimm saw that he had better not argue the matter, and he did as he was bidden. He was, indeed, very much surprised at the sudden turn of affairs, for he was perfectly well aware that Tom Craik had made a will some years previously, in which he left his whole fortune to his only sister, Trimm’s wife. The lawyer wondered what his brother-in-law intended to do now, and as the only means of ascertaining the truth seemed to be to obey his orders, he lost no time in preparing to receive the dictation.

“This is the last will and testament of me, Thomas Craik,” said the sick man sharply. ‘Got that? Go on. “I do hereby revoke and annul all former wills made by me.” That’s correct, isn’t it? No, I’m not wandering—not a bit. Very important that clause—very. Go ahead about the just debts and funeral expenses. I needn’t dictate that.’

Trimm wrote rapidly on, nervously anxious to get to the point.

‘Got that? Well, “I bequeath all my worldly possessions, real and personal estate of all kinds”—go on with the stock phrases—include house and furniture, trinkets and everything.’

Trimm’s hand moved quickly along the ruled lines of the foolscap.

‘To whom?’ he asked, almost breathlessly, as he reached the end of the formal phrase.

“To George Winton Wood,” said Craik, with an odd snap of the lips. ‘His name’s on that card, Sherry, beside you, if you don’t know how to spell it. Go on. “Son of Jonah Wood, of New York, and of Fanny Winton, deceased, also of New York.” No mistake about the identity, eh? Got it down? “To have and to hold”—and all the rest of it. Let’s get to the signature—look sharp! Get in the witness clause right—that’s the most important—don’t forget to say, “In our presence and in the presence of each other”—there’s where the hitch comes in about proving wills. All right. Ring for the doctor, and we’ll have the witnesses right away. Make the date clear.’

Sherrington Trimm had not recovered from his surprise as he pressed the silver button of the bell. The physician entered immediately.

‘Can you be the other witness yourself, Sherry? Rather

not? Doctor, just send for Stubbs, will you, please? He'll do, won't he?

Trimm nodded, while he and the physician set a small invalid's table upon the sick man's knees, and spread upon it the will, of which the ink was not yet dry. Trimm dipped the pen in the ink and handed it to Mr. Craik.

'Let me drink first,' said the latter. He swallowed the small draught eagerly, and then looked about him.

'Will you sign?' asked Trimm, nervously.

'Is Stubbs here? Wait for him. Here, Stubbs—you see—this is my will. I'm going to sign it, and you're a witness.'

'Yes, sir,' said the butler gravely. He moved forward cautiously, so that he could see the document and recognise it if he should ever be called upon to do so.

The sick man steadied himself while the doctor thrust his arm behind the pillows to give him more support. Then he set the pen to the paper and traced his name in large clear characters. He did not take his eyes from the paper until the doctor and the servant had signed as witnesses. Then his head fell back on the pillows.

'Take that thing away, Sherry, and keep it,' he said feebly, for the strength had gone out of him all at once. 'You may want it to-morrow—or you may not.'

Mechanically he laid his fingers on his own pulse, and then lay quite still. Sherrington Trimm looked at the doctor with an expression of inquiry, but the latter only shrugged his shoulders and turned away. After such a manifestation of energy as he had just seen he felt that it was impossible to foresee what would happen. Tom Craik's nerves might weather the strain after all, and he might recover. Mr. Trimm folded the document neatly, wrapped it in a second sheet of paper, and put it into his pocket. Then he prepared to take his leave. He touched the sick man's hand gently.

'Good-night, Tom,' he said, bending over his brother-in-law. 'I will call in the morning and ask how you are.'

Craik opened his eyes.

'Tell nobody what I have done till I'm dead,' he answered in a whisper. 'Good-night.'

Mr. Trimm felt no inclination to divulge the contents of the will. He was a very shrewd and keen man, who could certainly not be accused of having ever neglected his own interest; but he was also scrupulously honest, not only with that professional

honesty which is both politic and lucrative, but in all his thoughts and reasonings with himself. At the present moment his position was not an agreeable one. It is true that neither he nor his wife was in need of Craik's money, for they had plenty of their own ; but it is equally certain that during several years past they had confidently expected to inherit the old man's fortune if he died before them. Trimm had himself drawn up the will by which his wife was made the heir to almost everything Craik possessed. There had been a handsome legacy provided for this same George Winton Wood, but all the rest was to have been Totty's. And now Trimm had seen the whole aspect of the future changed by a stroke of the pen, apparently during the last minutes of the old man's life. He knew that the testator was in full possession of his senses, and that the document was as valid as any will could be. Conscientious as he was, if he had believed that Craik was no longer sane he would have been quite ready to take advantage of the circumstance, and would have lost no time in consulting the physician with a view to obtaining evidence in the case that would arise. But it was evident that Craik's mind was in no way affected by his illness. The thing was done, and if Craik died it was irrevocable. Sherry and Totty Trimm would never live in the magnificent house of which they had so often talked.

' Not even the house ! ' he whispered to himself as he went down stairs. ' Not even the house ! '

For a legacy he would not have cared. A few thousands were no object to him, and he was unlike his wife in that he did not care for money itself. The whole fortune, or half of it, added to what the couple already had, would have made in their lives the difference between luxury and splendour ; the possession of the house alone, with what it contained, would have given them the keenest pleasure ; but in Trimm's opinion a paltry legacy of ten thousand dollars or so would not have been worth the trouble of taking. Of course, it was possible that Tom Craik might recover, and make a third will. Trimm knew by experience that a man who will once change his mind completely, may change it a dozen times if he have time. But Craik was very ill, and there seemed little likelihood of his ever getting upon his legs again.

Trimm had known much of his brother-in-law's affairs during the last twenty years, and he was far less surprised at the way in which he had now finally wound them up, before taking his departure from life, than most people would have been. He knew better than anyone that Craik was not so utterly bad-hearted as

he was generally believed to be, and he knew that as the man grew older he felt twinges of remorse when he thought of Jonah Wood. That he cordially detested the latter was not altogether astonishing, since he had so greatly injured him; but the natural contrariety of his nature forced him into an illogical situation. He hated Wood, and yet he desired to make him some sort of restitution, not, indeed, out of principle or respect for any law, human or divine, but as a means of pacifying his half-nervous, half-superstitious conscience. He could not have done anything openly in the matter, for that would have been equivalent to acknowledging the unwritten debt; so that the only way out of his difficulty lay in the disposal of his fortune after his death. But, although he suffered something very like remorse, he hated Jonah Wood too thoroughly to insert his name in his will. There was nothing to be done but to leave money to George. It had seemed to him that a legacy of a hundred thousand dollars would be enough to procure his own peace of mind, and having once made that arrangement he had dismissed the subject.

But as he lay in this illness, which he believed was to be his last, a further change had taken place in his view of the matter. He was naturally suspicious as well as shrewd, and the extreme anxiety displayed by his sister had attracted his attention. They had always lived on excellent terms, and Totty was distinctly a woman of demonstrative temperament. It was assuredly not surprising that she should show much feeling for her brother and spend much time in taking care of him. It was quite right that she should be at his bedside in moments of danger, and that she should besiege the doctors with questions about Tom's chances of recovery. But in Tom's opinion there was a false note in her good behaviour and a false ring in her voice. There was something strained, something not quite natural, something he could hardly define, but which roused all the powers of opposition for which he had been famous throughout his life. It was a peculiarity of his malady that his mental faculties were wholly unimpaired, and were, if anything, sharpened by his bodily sufferings and by his anxiety about his own state. The consequence was that, as soon as the doubt about Totty's sincerity had entered his mind, he had concentrated his attention upon it, had studied it, and had applied himself to accounting for her minutest actions and most careless words upon the theory that she was playing a part. In less than twenty-four hours the suspicion had become a conviction, and Craik felt sure that Totty was overdoing her show

of sisterly affection in order to hide her delight at the prospect of her brother's death. It is not too unjust to say that there was a proportion of truth in Mr. Craik's suppositions, and that Mrs. Sherrington Trimm's perturbation of spirit did not result so much from the dread of a great sorrow as from the prospect of a very great satisfaction when that sorrow should have spent itself. She was not in the least ashamed of her heartlessness, either. Was she not doing everything in her power to soothe her brother's last days, sacrificing to his comfort the last taste of gaiety she could enjoy until the mourning for him should be over, submitting to a derangement of her comfortable existence which was nothing short of distracting? It was not her fault if Tom had not one of those lovable natures whose departure from this life leaves a great void in the place where they have dwelt.

But from being convinced that Totty cared only for the money to the act of depriving her of it was a long distance for the old man's mind to pass over. He was just enough to admit that in a similar position he would have felt very much as she did, though he would certainly have acted his part more skilfully and with less theatrical exaggeration. After all, money was a very good thing, and a very desirable thing, as Thomas Craik knew better than most people. After all, too, Totty was his sister, his nearest relation, the only one of his connections with whom he had not quarrelled at one time or another. The world would think it very natural that she should have everything, and there was no reason why she should not, unless her anxiety to get it could be called one. He considered the case in all its bearings. If, for instance, that young fellow, George Wood, whom he had not seen since he had been a boy, were to be put in Totty's place, what would he feel, and what would he do? He would undoubtedly wish that Tom Craik might die speedily, and his eyes would assuredly gleam when he thought of moving into the gorgeous house a month after the funeral. That was only human nature—simple, unadorned, everyday human nature. But the boy supposed that he had no chance of getting anything, and did not even think it worth while to ring at the door and ask the news of his dying relation. Of course not; why should he? And yet, thought the sour old man, if George Wood could guess how near he was to being made a millionaire, how nimbly his feet would move in the appropriate direction, with what alacrity he would ring the bell, with what an accent of subdued sympathy he would question the servant! Truly, if by any chance he should take it into his head to make inquiries,

there would be an instance of disinterested good feeling indeed. He would never do that. Why, then, should the money be given to him rather than to Totty?

But the idea had taken possession of the old man's active brain, and would not be chased away. As he thought about it, too, it seemed as though he might die more easily if such full restitution were made. No one could tell anything about the future state of existence. Thomas Craik was no atheist, though he had never found time or inclination to look into the question of religion, and certain peculiarities in his past conduct had made any such meditations particularly distasteful to him. When once the end had come the money could be of no use to him, and if George Wood had it, Thomas Craik might stand a better chance in the next world. Totty had received her share of the gain, too, and had no claim to any more of it. He had managed her business with his own, and had enriched her while enriching himself with what had belonged to Jonah Wood and to a great number of other people. At all events, if he left everything to George no one could accuse him hereafter—whatever that might mean—with not having done all he could to repair the wrong. He said to himself, philosophically, that one of two things must happen: either he was to die, and in that case he would do well to die with as clear a conscience as he could buy; or he was to recover, and would then have plenty of time to reflect upon his course without having deprived himself of what he liked.

At last, between the two paths that were open to him, he became confused, and with characteristic coolness he determined to leave the matter to chance. If George Wood showed enough interest in him to come to the door and make inquiries, he would change his will. If the young fellow did not show himself, Totty should have the fortune.

'That's what I call giving Providence a perfectly fair chance,' he said to himself. A few hours after he had reached this conclusion George actually came to the house.

Then Tom Craik hesitated no longer. The whole thing was done and conclusively settled without loss of time, as Craik had always loved to do business.

It is probable that if George had guessed the importance of the simple act of asking after his relation's condition he would have gone home without passing the door, and would have spent so much time in reflecting upon his course that it would have been too late to do anything in the matter. The problem would

not have been an easy one to solve, involving as it did a question of honesty in motive on the one hand, and a consideration of true justice on the other. If any one had asked him for his advice in a similar case, he would have answered, with a dry laugh, that a man should never neglect his opportunities, that no one would be injured by the transaction, and that the money belonged by right to the family of the man from whom it had been unjustly taken. But though George could affect a cynically practical business tone in talking of other people's affairs, he was not capable of acting upon such principles in his own case. To extract profit of any sort from what was nothing short of hypocrisy would have been impossible to him.

He had been unable to resist the temptation of asking the news, because he sincerely hoped that the old man was about to draw his last breath, and because there seemed to him to be something attractively ironical in the action. He even expected that Mr. Craik would understand that the inquiry was made from motives of hatred rather than of sympathy, and imagined with pleasure that the thought might inflict a sting and embitter his last moments. There was nothing contrary to George's feelings in that, though he would have flushed with shame at the idea that he was to be misunderstood, and that what was intended for an insult was to be rewarded with a splendid fortune.

Very possibly, too, there was a feeling of opposition concerned in his act, for which he himself could not have accounted. He was not fond of advice, and Constance Fearing had seemed very anxious that he should not do what he had done. Being still very young, it seemed absurd to him that a young girl whom he scarcely knew, and had only seen twice, should interfere with his free-will.

This contrariety was wholly unreasoning, and if he had tried to understand it he would have failed in the attempt. He would certainly not have attributed it to the beginning of a serious affection, for he was not old enough to know how often love's early growth is hidden by what we take wrongly for an antagonism of feeling.

However all these things may be explained, George Wood felt that he was in a humour quite new to him when he rang at Tom Craik's door. He was elated without knowing why, and yet he was full of viciously combative instincts. His heart beat with a pleasant alacrity, and his mind was unusually clear. He would have said that he was happy, and yet his happiness was by no

means of the kind which makes men at peace with their surroundings or gentle toward those with whom they have to do. There was something overbearing in it, that agreed with his natural temper, and that found satisfaction in what was meant for an act of unkindness.

He found his father reading before the fire. The old gentleman read, as he did everything else, with the air of a man who is performing a serious duty. He sat in a high-backed chair with wooden arms, his glasses carefully adjusted upon his nose, his head held high, his lips set in a look of determination, his long hands holding the heavy volume in the air before his sight, and expressive in their solid grasp of a fixed and unalterable purpose. George paused on the threshold, wondering for the thousandth time that so much resolution of character as was visible in the least of his father's actions should have produced so little practical result in the struggles of a long life.

'Won't you shut that door, George?' said Jonah Wood, not looking away from his book nor moving a muscle.

George did as he was requested, and came slowly forward. He stood still for a moment before the fireplace, spreading his hands to the blaze.

'Tom Craik is dying,' he said at last, looking at his father's face.

There was an almost imperceptible quiver in the strong hands that held the book. A very slight colour rose in the massive grey face. But that was all. The eyes remained fixed on the page, and the angle at which the volume was supported did not change.

'Well,' said the mechanical voice, 'we must all die some day.'

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE world was very much surprised when it was informed that Thomas Craik was not dead after all. During several weeks he lay in the utmost danger, and it was little short of a miracle that he was kept alive—one of those miracles which are sometimes performed upon the rich by physicians in luck. While he was ill George, who was disappointed to find that there was so much life in his enemy, made frequent inquiries at the house—a fact of

which Mr. Craik took note, setting it down to the young man's credit. Nor did it escape the keen old man that his sister Totty's expression grew less hopeful as he himself grew better, and that her fits of spasmodic and effusive rejoicing over his recovery were succeeded by periods of abstraction, during which she seemed to be gazing regretfully upon some slowly-receding vision of happiness.

Mrs. Sherrington Trimm was, indeed, not to be envied. In the first place, all immediate prospect of inheriting her brother's fortune was removed by his unexpected convalescence; and, secondly, she had a suspicion that in the midst of his illness he had made some change in the disposition of his wealth. It would be hard to say how this belief had formed itself in her mind, for her husband was a man of honour, and had scrupulously obeyed Craik's injunction to be silent in regard to the will. He found this the more easy because what he liked least in his wife's character was her love of money. Having only one child, he deemed his own and Totty's fortunes more than sufficient, and he feared lest, if she were suddenly enriched beyond her neighbours, she might launch into the career of a leader of society, and take up a position very far from agreeable to his own more modest tastes. Sherry Trimm was an eminently sensible as well as an eminently honourable man. He possessed a very keen sense of the ridiculous, and he knew how easily a woman like Totty could be made the subject of ridicule, if she had her own way, and if she suddenly were placed in circumstances where the question of expenditure need never be taken into consideration. She had rarely lost an opportunity of telling him what she should do if she were enormously rich, and it was not hard to see that she confidently expected to possess such riches as would enable her to carry out what Sherry called her threats.

On the other hand, Mr. Trimm's sense of honour was satisfied by his brother-in-law's new will. There is a great deal more of that sort of manly, honourable feeling among Americans than is dreamed of in European philosophy. Europe calls us a nation of business-men, but it generally forgets that we are not a nation of shopkeepers, and that, if we esteem a merchant as highly as a soldier or a lawyer, it is because we know by experience that the hands which handle money can be kept as clean as those that draw the sword or hold the pen. In strong races the man ennobles the occupation, the occupation does not degrade the man. If Thomas Craik was dishonest, Jonah Wood and Sherrington Trimm

were both as upright gentlemen as any in the whole world. It was not in Jonah Wood's power to recover what had been taken from him by operations that were only just within the pale of the law, because laws have not yet been made for such cases; nor was it Sherrington Trimm's vocation to play upon Tom Craik's conscience in the interests of semi-poetic justice. But Trimm was honourable enough and disinterested enough to rejoice at the prospect of seeing stolen money restored to its possessor, instead of being emptied into his wife's purse, and he was manly enough to have felt the same satisfaction in the act if his own circumstances had been far less flourishing.

But Totty thought very differently of all these things. She had in her much of her brother's nature, and the love of money—which, being interpreted into American, means essentially the love of what money can give—dominated her character, and poisoned the pleasant qualities with which she was undoubtedly endowed. She had, as a natural concomitant, the keenest instinct about money and the quarter from which it was to be expected. Something was wrong in her financial atmosphere, and she felt the diminution of pressure as quickly and as certainly as a good barometer indicates the approaching south wind when the weather is still clear and bright. It was of no use to question her husband, and she knew her brother well enough to be aware that he would conceal his purpose to the last. But there was an element of anxiety and doubt in her life which she had not known before. Tom Craik saw that much in her face, and suspected that it was the result of his recovery. He did not regret what he had done, and he made up his mind to abide by it.

Meanwhile, George Wood varied the dreariness of his hard-working life by seeing as much as possible of the *Fearings*. He went to the house in Washington Square as often as he dared, and before long his visits had assumed a regularity which was noticeable, to say the least of it. If he had still felt any doubt as to what was passing in his own heart at the end of the first month, he felt none whatever as the spring advanced. He was in love with Constance, and he knew it. The young girl was aware of the fact also, as was her sister, who looked on with evident disapproval.

'Why do you not send the man away?' Grace asked one evening when they were alone.

'Why should I?' inquired Constance, changing colour a little, though her voice was quiet.

'Because you are flirting with him, and no good can come of it,' Grace answered bluntly.

'Flirting? I?' The elder girl raised her eyebrows in innocent surprise. The idea was evidently new to her, and by no means agreeable.

'Yes, flirting. What else can you call it, I would like to know? He comes to see you—oh yes, you cannot deny it. It is certainly not for me. He knows I am engaged; and besides, I think he knows that I do not like him. Very well—he comes to see you, then. You receive him, you smile, you talk, you take an interest in everything he does—I heard you giving him advice the other day. Is not that flirting? He is in love with you, or pretends to be, which is the same thing, and you encourage him.'

'Pretends to be? Why should he pretend?' Constance asked the questions rather dreamily, as though she had put them to herself before, and more than half knew the answer. Grace laughed a little.

'Because you are eminently worth while,' she replied. 'Do you suppose that if you were as poor as he is, he would come so often?'

'That is not very good-natured,' observed Constance, taking up her book again. There was very little surprise in her tone, however, and Grace was glad to note the fact. Her sister was less simple than she had supposed.

'Good nature!' she exclaimed. 'What has good nature to do with it? Do you think Mr. Wood comes here out of good nature? He wants to marry you, my dear. He cannot, and therefore you ought to send him away.'

'If I loved him, I would marry him.'

'But you do not. And, besides, the thing is absurd! A man with no position of any sort—none of any sort, I assure you—without fortune, and, what is much worse, without any profession.'

'Literature is a profession.'

'Oh, literature!—yes. Of course it is. But those miserable little criticisms he writes are not literature. Why does he not write a book, or even join a newspaper and be a journalist?'

'Perhaps he will. I am always telling him that he should. And as for position, he is a gentleman, whether he chooses to go into society or not. His father was a New Englander, I believe—but I have heard poor papa say very nice things about him—and

his mother was a Winton, and a cousin of Mrs. Trimm's. There is nothing better than that, I suppose.'

'Yes—that odious Totty!' exclaimed Grace, in a tone of unmeasured contempt. 'She brought him here in the hope that one of us would take a fancy to him, and help her poor relation out of his difficulties. Besides, she is the silliest, shallowest little woman I ever knew!'

'I dare say. I am not fond of her. But you are unjust to Mr. Wood. He is very talented, and he works very hard—'

'At what? At those wretched little paragraphs? I could write a dozen of them in an hour?'

'I could not. One has to read the books first, you know.'

'Well—say two hours, then. I am sure I could write a dozen in two hours. Such stuff, my dear! You are dazzled by his conversation. He does talk fairly well, when he pleases. I admit that.'

'I am glad you leave him something,' said Constance, 'As for my marrying him, that is a very different matter. I have not the slightest idea of doing that. To be quite honest, the idea has crossed my mind that he might wish it—'

'And yet you let him come?'

'Yes. I cannot tell him not to come here, and I like him too much to be unkind to him—to be cold and rude for the sake of sending him away. If he ever speaks of it, it will be time to tell him what I think. If he does not, it does him no harm—nor me either, as far as I can see.'

'I do not know. It seems to me that to encourage a man, and then drop him when he can hold his tongue no longer, is the reverse of human kindness.'

'And it seems to me, my dear, that you are beginning to argue from another side of the question. I did not understand that it was out of consideration for Mr. Wood—'

'No, it was not,' Grace admitted, with a laugh. 'I am cruel enough to wish that you would be unkind to him without waiting for him to offer himself. You are a very inscrutable person, Conny. I wish I could find out what you really think.'

Constance made no answer, but smiled gently at her sister as she took up her book for the second time. She began to read, as though she did not care to continue the conversation, and Grace made no effort to renew it. She understood enough of Constance's character to be sure that she could never understand it thoroughly, and she relinquished the attempt to ascertain the real state of

things. If Constance had vouchsafed any reply, she would have said that she was in considerable perplexity concerning her own thoughts. For the present, however, her doubts gave her very little trouble. She possessed one of those calm characters which never force their owners to be in a hurry about a decision, and she was now, as always, quite willing to wait and see what course her inclinations would take.

Calmness of this sort is often the result of an inborn distrust of motives in oneself and in others, combined with an almost total absence of impatience. The idea that it is in general better to wait than to act gets the upper hand of the whole nature, and keeps it, perhaps throughout life, perhaps only until some strong and disturbing passion breaks down the fabric of indolent prejudice which surrounds such minds. Constance had thought of most of the points which her sister had brought up against George Wood, and was not at all surprised to hear Grace speak as she had spoken. On the contrary, she felt a sort of mental pride in having herself discerned all the objections which stood in the way of her loving George. None of them had appeared to be insurmountable, because none of them were in reality quite just. She was willing to admit that her fortune might be what most attracted him, but she had no proof of the fact; and having doubted him, she was quite as much inclined to doubt her own judgment of him. His social position was not satisfactory, as Grace had said, but she had come to the conclusion that this was due to his distaste for society, especially since she had heard many persons of her acquaintance express their regret that the two Woods could not forget old scores. His literary performances were assuredly not of the first order, and she felt an odd sort of shame for him, when she thought of the poor little paragraphs he turned out in the papers, and compared the work with his conversation. But George had often explained to her that he was obliged to write his notices in a certain way, and that he occupied his spare time in producing matter of a very different description. In fact, there were answers to every one of Grace's objections, and Constance had already framed for herself the replies she was prepared to give her sister.

Her principal difficulty lay in another direction. Was the very decided liking she felt for George Wood the beginning of love, or was it not? That it was not love at the present time she was convinced, for her instinct told her truly that, if she had loved him, she could not have discussed him so calmly. What

she defined as her liking was, however, already so pronounced that she could see no objection to allowing it to turn into something warmer and stronger if it would, provided she were able to convince herself of George's sincerity. Her fortune was certainly in the way. What man in such circumstances, she asked herself, could be indifferent to the prospect of such a luxurious independence as was hers to confer upon him she married? She wished that some concatenation of events might deprive her of her wealth for a time long enough to admit of her trying the great experiment, on condition that it might be restored to her so soon as the question was decided in one way or the other. Nevertheless, she believed that, if she really loved him, she could forget to doubt the simplicity of his affection.

George, on his part, was not less sensitive upon the same point. His hatred of all sordid considerations was such that he feared lest his intentions might be misinterpreted wherever there was a question of money. On the other hand, he was becoming aware that his intercourse with Constance Fearing could not continue much longer upon its present footing. There existed no pretext of relationship to justify the intimacy that had sprung out of his visits, and even in a society in which the greatest latitude is often allowed to young and marriageable women his assiduity could not fail to attract attention. The fact that the two young girls had a companion in the person of an elderly lady distantly connected with them did not materially help matters. She was a faded, timid, retiring woman, who was rarely seen, and who, indeed, took pains to keep herself out of the way when there were any visitors, fearing always to intrude where she might not be wanted. George had seen her once or twice, but was convinced that she did not know him by sight. He knew, however, that his frequent visits had been the subject of remark among the young girls' numerous acquaintance, for his cousin Totty had told him so with evident satisfaction, and he guessed from Grace's behaviour that she at least would be glad to see no more of him. What Grace had told her sister, however, was strictly true. Constance encouraged him. George was neither tactless nor fatuous, and if Constance had shown that his presence was distasteful to her he would have kept away, and cured himself of his half-developed attachment as best he could.

About this time an incident occurred which was destined to produce a very decided effect upon his life. One afternoon in May he was walking slowly down Fifth Avenue on his way to

Washington Square, when he suddenly found himself face to face with old Tom Craik, who was at that moment coming out of one of the clubs. The old man was not as erect as he had been before his illness, but he was much less broken down than George had supposed. His keen eyes still peered curiously into the face of every passer, and he still set down his stick with a sharp, determined rap at every step. Before George could avoid the meeting, as he would instinctively have done had there been time, he was conscious of being under his relation's inquiring glance. He was not sure that the latter recognised him, but he knew that a recognition was possible. Under the circumstances he could not do less than greet his father's enemy, who was doubtless aware of his many inquiries during the period of danger. George lifted his hat civilly, and would have passed on, but the old gentleman stopped him, to his great surprise, and held out a thin hand, tightly encased in a straw-coloured glove—he permitted himself certain exaggerations of dress, which, somehow, were not altogether incongruous in his case.

'You are George Wood?' he asked. George was struck by the disagreeable nature of his voice, and at the same time by the speaker's evident intention to make it sound pleasantly.

'Yes, Mr. Craik,' the young man answered, still somewhat confused by the suddenness of the meeting.

'I am glad I have met you. It was kind of you to ask after me when I was down. I thank you. It showed a good heart.'

Tom Craik was sincere, and George looked in vain for the trace of a sneer on the parchment that covered the worn features, and listened without detecting the least modulation of irony in the tones of the cracked voice. He felt a sharp sting of remorse in his heart. What he had meant for something very like an insult had been misunderstood, had been kindly received, and now he was to be thanked for it.

'I hate you, and I asked because I wanted to be told that you were dead'—he could not say that, though the words were in his mind, and he could almost hear himself speaking them. A flush of shame rose to his face.

'It seemed natural to inquire,' he said, after a moment's hesitation. It had seemed very natural to him, as he remembered.

'Did it? Well, I am glad it did, then. It would not have seemed so to every young man in your position. Good day—good day to you. Come and see me, if you care to.'

Again the thin, gloved hand grasped his, and George was left alone on the pavement, listening to the sharp rap of the stick on the stones as the old man walked rapidly away. He stood still for a moment, and then went on down the Avenue. The dry, regular rapping of that stick was peculiarly disagreeable, and he seemed to hear it long after he was out of earshot.

He was very much annoyed. More than that, he was sincerely distressed. Could he have guessed what had been the practical result of his inquiries during the illness, he would assuredly have even then turned and overtaken Tom Craik, and would have explained with savage frankness that he was no friend, but a bitter enemy, who would have rejoiced to hear that death had followed and overtaken its victim ; but, since he could not dream of what had happened, it appeared to him that any explanation would be an act of perfectly gratuitous brutality. It was not likely that he should meet the old man often, and there would certainly be no necessity for any further exchange of civilities. He suffered all the more in his pride because he must henceforth accept the credit of having seemed kindly disposed.

Then he remembered how, at his second meeting with Constance Fearing, she had earnestly advised him not to do what had led to the present situation. It would have been different had he known her as he knew her now, had he loved her as he undoubtedly loved her to-day. But as things had been then, he hardly blamed himself for having been roused to opposition by his strong dislike of advice.

‘I have received the reward of my iniquities,’ he said, as he sat down in his accustomed seat and looked at her delicate face.

‘What has happened to you?’ she asked, raising her eyes with evident interest.

‘Something very disagreeable. Do you like to hear confessions? And when you do, are you inclined to give absolution to your penitents?’

‘What is it? What do you want to tell me?’ Her face expressed some uneasiness.

‘Do you remember, when I first came here—the second time, I should say—when Tom Craik was in such a bad way, and I hoped he would die? You know, I told you I would go and leave a card, with inquiries, and you advised me not to. I went—in fact, I called several times.’

‘You never told me. Why should you? It was foolish of me, too. It was none of my business.’

'I wish I had taken your advice. The old man got well again, but I have not seen him till to-day. Just now, as I walked here, he was coming out of his club, and I ran against him before I knew where I was. Do you know, he had taken my inquiries seriously—thought I asked out of pure milk-and-water of human-kindness, so to say—thanked me so nicely, and asked me to go and see him! I felt like such a beast.'

Constance laughed; and for some reason or other the high, musical ring of her laughter did not give George as much satisfaction as usual.

'What did you do?' she asked a moment later.

'I hardly know. I could not tell him to his face that he had not appreciated my peculiar style of humour, that I loathed him as I loathed the plague, and that I had called to know whether the undertaker was in the house. I believe I said something civil—contemptibly civil, considering the circumstances—and he left me in front of the club feeling as if I had eaten something I did not like. I wish you had been there to get me out of the scrape with some more good advice.'

'I? Why should I——?'

'Because, after all, you got me into it, Miss Fearing,' George answered, rather sadly. 'So, perhaps, you would have known what to do this time.'

'I got you into the scrape?' Constance looked as much distressed as though it were really all her fault.

'Oh, no—I am not in earnest, exactly. Only, I have such an abominably contrary nature that I went to Tom Craik's door just because you advised me not to—that is all. I had only seen you twice then—and——;' he stopped, and looked fixedly at the young girl's face.

'I knew I was wrong even then,' Constance answered, with a faint blush. The colour was not the result of any present thought, nor of any suspicion of what George was about to say; it was due to her recollection of her conduct on that long-remembered afternoon nearly four months earlier.

'No. I ought to have known that you were right. If you were to give me advice now——'

'I would rather not,' interrupted the young girl.

'I would follow it, if you did,' said George, earnestly. 'There is a great difference between that time and this.'

'Is there?'

'Yes. Do you not feel it?'

‘I know you better than I did.’

‘And I know you better—very much better.’

‘I am glad that makes you more ready to follow sensible advice—’

‘Your advice, Miss Fearing. I did not mean—’

‘Mine, then, if you like it better. But I shall never offer you any more. I have offered you too much already, and I am sorry for it.’

‘I would rather you gave me advice—than nothing,’ said George in a lower voice.

‘What else should I give you?’ Her voice had a ring of surprise in it. She seemed startled.

‘What you will never give, I am afraid—what I have little enough the right to ask.’

Constance laid down the work she held, and looked out of the window. There was a strange expression in her face, as though she were wavering between fear and satisfaction.

‘Mr. Wood,’ she said suddenly, ‘you are making love to me.’

‘I know I am. I mean to,’ he answered, with an odd roughness, as the light flashed into his eyes. Then, all at once, his voice softened wonderfully. ‘I do it badly—forgive me—I never did it before. I should not be doing it now if I could help myself—but I cannot. This once—this once only—Constance, I love you with all my heart.’

He was timid, and women, whether old or young, do not like timidity. It was not that he lacked either force or courage by nature, nor any of those qualities whereby women are won. But the life he had led had kept him younger than he believed himself to be, and his solitary existence had given his ideal of Constance the opportunity of developing more quickly than the reality. He loved her, it is true, but as yet in a peaceful, unruffled way, which partook more of boundless admiration than of passion. An older man would have recognised the difference in himself. The girl’s finer perceptions were aware of it without comprehending it in the least. Nevertheless, it was an immense satisfaction to George to speak out the words which in his heart had so long been written as a motto about the shrine of his imagination.

Constance said nothing in answer, but rose, after a moment’s pause, and went and stood before the fireplace, now filled with ferns and plants, for the weather was already warm. She turned her back upon George, and seemed to be looking at the things

that stood on the chimney-piece. George rose, too, and came and stood beside her, trying to see her face.

'Are you angry?' he asked softly. 'Have I offended you?'

'No, I am not angry,' she answered. 'But—but—was there any use in saying it?'

'You do not love me at all? You do not care whether I come or go?'

She pitied him, for his disappointment was genuine, and she knew that he suffered something, though it might not be very much.

'I do not know what love is,' she said thoughtfully. 'Yes—I care. I like to see you—I am interested in what you do—I should be sorry never to see you again; but I do not feel—what is it one should feel when one loves?'

'Is there any one—any man—whom you like better than you like me?'

'No,' she answered, with some hesitation, 'I do not think there is.'

'And there is a chance that you may like me better still—that you may some day even love me?'

'Perhaps. I cannot tell. I have not known you very long.'

'It seems long to me; but you give me all I ask—more than I had a right to hope for. I thank you with all my heart.'

'There is little to thank me for. Do you think I mean more than I say?' She turned her head, and looked calmly into his eyes. 'Do you think I am promising anything?'

'I would like to think so. But what could you promise me? You would not marry me, even if you loved me as I love you.'

'You are wrong. If I loved you, I would marry you—if I were sure that your love was real, too. But it is not. I am sure it is not. You make yourself think you love me—'

The young man's dark face seemed to grow darker still as she watched it. There was passion in it now, but of a kind other than loving. His over-sensitive nature had already taken offence.

'Please do not go on, Miss Fearing,' he said, in a low voice that trembled angrily. 'You have said enough already.'

Constance drew back in extreme surprise, and looked as though she had misunderstood him.

'Why—what have I said?' she asked.

'You know what you meant. You are cruel and unjust,'

There was a short pause, during which Constance seemed to be trying to grasp the situation, while George stood at the other end of the chimney-piece, staring at the pattern in the carpet. The girl's first impulse was to leave the room, for his anger frightened and repelled her. But she was too sensible for that, and she thought she knew him too well to let such a scene pass without an explanation. She gathered all her courage and faced him again.

'Mr. Wood,' she said, with a firmness he had never seen in her, 'I give you my word that I meant nothing in the least unkind. It is you who are doing me an injustice. I have a right to know what you understood from my words.'

'What could you have meant?' he asked coldly. 'You are, I believe, very rich. Everyone knows that I am very poor. You say that I make myself think I love you—'

'Good heavens!' cried Constance. 'You do not mean to say that you thought that! But I never said it, I never meant it—I would not think it—'

There was a little exaggeration in the last words. She had thought of it, and that recently, though not when she had spoken. It was enough, however. George believed her, and the cloud disappeared from his face. It was she who took his hand first, and the grasp was almost affectionate in its warmth.

'You will never think that of me?' he asked earnestly.

'Never! Forgive me if any word of mine could have seemed to mean that I did.'

'Thank you,' he answered. 'It is only my own folly, of course, and I am the one to be forgiven. Things may be different some day.'

'Yes,' assented Constance, with a little hesitation—'some day.'

A moment later George left the house, feeling as a soldier does who has been under fire for the first time.

*(To be continued.)*

## *At the Sign of the Ship.*

### A SCHOOL OF FICTION.

MR. WALTER BESANT, after inventing a People's Palace, in a novel, has seen it become a fact. Now, after inventing a School of Fiction as a possible fact, why should he not make it the ground of a novel? It sounds as if it were a topic which would suit his art, for it has just enough of the fantastic, while on every side it touches reality. A School of Fiction, we say, but why not a University? The University would need many colleges. There might be several in London alone for the observation of the manners of Londoners, and several in various parts of the country. Then we need an Italian college, a college in France, and another in Germany, while the classics of romance demand halls, at least, in South and Central Africa, in Chiapas, in Hindostan, and, in fact, wherever there are disciples and matter for study. The scheme would bring together people who, certainly, might not otherwise meet, for almost everybody but Mr. Gladstone has had some intention of writing a novel, and of course would be glad to begin by a suitable course of education. This I fear would, in many cases, have to be almost elementary. There would, of course, be matriculation examinations, including an easy French paper; for example—

### I.

Correct, where necessary, the following :—

A l'outrance. Bête Noire. Le père du joli fille est le fils de jardinier. J'ai perdu mon rose.

### II.

Conjugate the verb 'Aimer.'

## III.

'Il n'est qui le premier pas que coûte.' How do you write this? Give your reasons.

With other simple conundrums.

Competitors will be requested to define the terms 'plagiary,' 'criticism,' 'edition,' 'realism,' 'romance,' 'naturalism,' and to discuss the comparative merits of half profits, and of royalties, with or without the use of algebra.

Sketches in character-drawing would also be required. A simple exercise would be to describe, in an epigrammatic manner, the invigilating examiner, with a fanciful outline of his probable sentimental history. As minute observation has to be cultivated, competitors might be asked to describe their own aunts, a class of the community often studied, and too frequently caricatured, by beginners, whose knowledge of life is often scanty. The local curate, doctor, lawyer, are also suggested as easy elementary subjects, which should certainly be undertaken before going on to earls, ladies of fashion, burglars, villains, and similar advanced and complicated themes.

No doubt a few simple and ordinary amorous problems will have to be stated and solved, as : A., in love with B., is engaged to C. What, in your opinion, is the proper solution of the case?

B., married to C. (who is twice her age), is devoted to A., who is engaged to D., but is in love with E. How would you propose to solve this?

B., in love with C., is aware that C. has committed the murder with which D. is charged. What course would you advise B. to pursue?

A. is acquainted with the whereabouts of a treasure in Terra del Fuego. It consists of cathedral plate, and A. is an elder of the Free Church of Scotland. Indicate the most probable action of A.

A., a clairvoyant, in love with B., has seen, in a trance, C. (married to B.) flirting with D., a Kamschatkan woman, in the neighbourhood of the North Pole. B. is disinclined to believe in clairvoyance. Discuss the position and prospects of A.

Give your opinion on unhappy endings, and on second marriages.

A working knowledge of Conveyancing, Baccarat, the Laws of the Duel, the Scottish Marriage Law, and that of Criminal Pro-

cedure will be required from all candidates for matriculation. This examination would weed them out a good deal. Many would be plucked ; and, as nobody would be allowed to publish a novel without a degree in the Art, the output of romance would undergo a salutary reduction ; for it is high time that the state interfered, reduced the most prolific authors to not more than nine volumes yearly, and generally looked after the interests of the consumer and the community. The professors, one presumes, would lecture, as a rule, *sine ulla solemnitate*. One would tell how he came to write his own novel, what suggested it, how it developed, how his characters took shape in his mind, and so on. Very likely a novel is sometimes suggested by a title. For example, were I a novelist, I would write one called *L'Hôtel Nécropole*, as much as I could manage in the manner of Mr. Henry James. Already the characters and the descriptions—perhaps especially the latter—come over me like a wave. I see the gloomy, new, bleak, white hotel, the consumptive inmates, the undeveloped orange-trees in the bare gardens ; I hear the pulmonary talk at the *table d'hôte* ; I have everything but the heroine. She is always a difficulty. Such a scheme, if I were a scholar of Mr. Besant's college, I would carry to my tutor. Some incidents I really must have, and I insist on the burning down of the hotel by an inmate who chevies a mosquito with a candle, in his mosquito curtains. May I have the Riviera earthquake, and is Monte Carlo to be introduced ? Dear imaginary novel ! if I were but a Fellow on Mr. Besant's foundation, how I would cherish it ! Professors and tutors will take walks with their pupils, and make them describe sunsets, and so forth. Adjectives will need a great deal of looking after. Would the learned Professor of Style allow Mr. Saltus to talk of tortoise-shell eyes ? This is a very delicate question. It is Mary Magdalene, I think, in Mr. Saltus's romance of that name who has eyes of tortoise-shell. This is a bold innovation, yet some eyes *are* like tortoise-shell, more or less. One can imagine very endearing relations between the professors and some of their pupils, just as in the old universities, where there are now girlish undergraduates. This is where Mr. Besant has a chance, if he ever listens to the prayer of our petition, and writes a novel on a School of Fiction. Would his villains be kept on the premises, and would Miss Cobbe object to psychological vivisection and the use of the moral scalpel, about which we hear so much ? I do not suggest the appointment of a Professor of *Naturalisme*, not judging the times ripe for that chair—at least, in mixed classes. Would

that one could have a small berth in the University, perhaps as a mere corrector of classic grammar to Mr. Edgar Saltus, so that this accomplished author might get his Greek and Latin plurals comparatively right! The lowly post of Mudie's Reader in the new University would suit very well. The question of endowments can be settled by disestablishing the Church in favour of a national institution more in keeping with the wants of the age.

\* \* \*

The following paragraphs will seem strangely familiar to readers of this Magazine to which Richard Jefferies was so constant a contributor. They were accidentally found by Mrs. Jefferies and forwarded to the editor. They are but scraps, but they serve to recall the 'touch of a vanished hand, the sound of a voice that is still.'

#### *THE GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.*

THIS lovely little bird is so small and light that it can cling suspended on the end of a single narrow leaf, or needle of pine, and it does not depress the least branch on which it may alight. The gold crest frequents the loneliest heath, the deepest pine wood, and the immediate neighbourhood of dwellings indifferently. A Scotch fir or pine grew so near a house in which I once lived that the boughs almost brushed the window, and when confined to my room by illness, it gave me much pleasure to watch a pair of these wrens who frequently visited the tree. They are also fond of thick thorn hedges, and, like all birds, have their favourite localities, so that if you see them once or twice in one place you should mark the tree or bush, for there they are almost certain to return. It would be quite possible for a person to pass several years in the country and never see one of these birds. There is a trick in finding birds' nests, and a trick in seeing birds. The first I noticed was in an orchard; soon after I found a second in a yew-tree (close to a window), and after that constantly came upon them as they crept through brambles or in hedgerows, or a mere speck up in a fir-tree. So soon as I had seen one I saw plenty.

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#### *AN EXTINCT RACE.*

THERE is something very mournful in a deserted house, and the feeling is still further intensified if it happens to have once been a school, where a minor world played out its little drama, and left

its history written on the walls. For a great boys' school is like a kingdom with its monarchs, its ministers, and executioners, and even its changes of dynasty. Such a house stood no long while since on the northern borderland of Wilts and Berks, a mansion in its origin back in the days of Charles II., and not utterly unconnected with the great events of those times, but which, for hard on a hundred years—from the middle of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century—was used as a superior grammar-school, or college as it would now be called. Gradually falling in reputation, and supplanted by modern rivals for fifteen or twenty years, the huge hollow halls and endless dormitories were silent, and the storms that sway with savage force down from the hills wreaked their will upon the windows and the rotting roof. Inside the refectory—the windows being blown in—and over the antique-carved mantelpiece, two swallows' nests had been built to the ceiling or cornice. The whitewashed walls were yellow and green with damp, and covered with patches of saltpetre efflorescence. But they still bore, legible and plain, the hasty inscriptions scrawled on them, years and years before, by hands then young, but by now returned to dust. The history of this little kingdom, the hopes and joys, the fears and hatreds of the subjects, still remained, and might be gathered from these writings on the walls, just as are the history of Egypt and of Assyria now deciphered from the palaces and tombs. Here were the names of the kings—the headmasters—generally with some rough doggrel verse, not often very flattering, and illustrated with outline portraits. Here were caricatures of the ushers and tutors, hidden in some corner of the dormitories once, no doubt, concealed by the furniture, coupled with the very freest personalities, mostly in pencil, but often done with a burnt stick. Dates were scattered everywhere—not often the year, but the day of the month, doubtless memorable from some expedition, or lark played off half a century since. Now and then there was a quotation from the classics—one describing the groaning and shouting of the dying Hercules, till the rocks and the sad hills resounded, which irresistibly suggested the idea of a thorough caning. Other inscriptions were a mixture of Latin and any English words that happened to rhyme, together producing the most extraordinary jumble. Where now are the merry hearts that traced these lines upon the plaster in an idle mood? Attached to the mansion was a great garden, or rather wilderness, with yew hedges ten feet high and almost as thick, a splendid

filbert walk, an orchard, with a sun-dial. It is all—mansion and garden, noble yew-tree hedges and filbert walk, sun-dial and all—swept away now. The very plaster upon which generation after generation of boys recorded their history has been torn down, and has crumbled into dust. Greater kingdoms than this have disappeared since the world began, leaving not a sign even of their former existence.

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#### ORCHIS MASCULA.

THE *Orchis mascula* grew in the brook corner and in early spring sent up a tall spike of purple flowers. This plant stood alone in an angle of the brook and a hedge, within sound of water ceaselessly falling over a dam. In those days it had an aspect of enchantment to me; not only on account of its singular appearance so different from other flowers, but because in old folios I had read that it could call up the passion of love. There was something in the root beneath the sward which could make a heart beat faster. The common modern books—I call them common of malice prepense—were silent on these things. Their dry and formal knowledge was without interest, mere lists of petals and pistils, a dried herbarium of plants that fell to pieces at the touch of the fingers. Only by chipping away at hard old Latin, contracted and dogged in more senses than one, and by gathering together scattered passages in classic authors, could anything be learned. Then there arose another difficulty, how to identify the magic plants? The same description will very nearly fit several flowers, especially when not actually in flower; how determine which really was the true root? The uncertainty and speculation kept up the pleasure, till at last I should not have cared to have had the original question answered. With my gun under my arm I used to look at the orchis from time to time so long as the spotted leaves were visible till the grass grew too long.

\* \* \*

The most virtuous and learned of the evening papers has lately discovered a new plagiarist. The sinner is a young lady of some eight summers, who recently made the innocent remark on being reminded of another lady by a pig. Mr. Du Maurier illustrated the harmless nursery legend in *Punch*, and the evening paper immediately announced that a similar unconscious jest

had been made by a clown in a poem of Oliver Goldsmith's. Something not very unlike it also appears in a speech in *L'École des Femmes*; beyond this I cannot follow it, but Molière was a noted thief, as the critics of his age took care to inform the public. Still, in the case of the little girl, the remark was original, for it is unlikely that she had ever even heard of Goldsmith or Molière. Her tender age and unsullied conscience have probably prevented her from defending her originality in the Press, but as she is perhaps the youngest person ever charged with trusting to her memory for her jokes, I venture to offer this defence of her conduct.

\* \* \*

The Scottish angler has begun to find out that there is something in the low English cunning of the dry fly. Lately, on the Tummell, I and a Northern angler saw some fish rising to a fly not unlike a 'Greenwell's Glory.' At the usual Scotch three wet flies on one cast they never glanced. The present writer, therefore, by precept much more than example, taught his Caledonian friend the trick, and he promptly cleared that pool of rising trout. They scarcely reached an average of three-quarters of a pound, but they looked much bigger when rising 'heads and tails' at the fly. This April has been a very late season in the North. Snow shone low down on all the hills; if ever there was any wind it was an inconstant and freezing puff from the north-east. The big trout in Loch Tummell lay low, and no five-pounders, nor even three-pounders, perhaps, would look at the fly. When the loch was absolutely still, when the sun shone, and the fly came out, the monsters began to move, showing their broad backs and greedy snouts. Perhaps it is possible to take Loch Tummell trout with the dry fly, but it is, of course, infinitely more difficult than in a river, owing to the absence of current. Any master who can do this trick would have rare sport on Loch Tummell. The loch is proverbially 'dour'; you whip, and whip, and, in a frozen April, never see a fin. In fact, you might as well be salmon-fishing. The prizes are great, but they seldom come to hand.

\* \* \*

We spoke lately of the Indian Rope Trick. Far from books, I cannot verify the reference in the Life of Apollonius of Tyana, where it is said to occur. But the following MS. notes by the late Colonel Henry Yule contain a good deal of information. It

is all of a hearsay sort, except the last item, by a mediæval Arab traveller :—

*MARVELS OF ORIENTAL CONJURING.*

As I write with much fatigue, I shall not here transcribe anything that is of easy access in print ; and I refer, therefore, to the Note 9, Book I., chapter xi., preferably in second edition (of Marco Polo) for the quotations already published.

Extract from a letter to me from R. B. Shaw (the first English traveller to reach Kashgar), dated Lahore, December 1, 1875 :—

‘I have heard stories related regarding a Buddhist high priest, whose temple is said to be not far to the east of Lanchu [in N.W. China], which reminds me of Marco Polo and Kubla Khan. The high priest is said to have the magic power of attracting cups and plates to him from a distance, so that things fly through the air into his hands. . . .

‘*A propos* of magic, a Manchu, long resident at Ila, described to me, amongst other feats of conjuring which he had seen, the rope-trick, by which a man and boy are said to ascend out of sight towards the sky, whence the severed limbs of the boy are afterwards thrown down. The man was himself a conjurer of some reputation, but did not pretend to be able to perform the trick. But it would seem that the tradition of it remains in those regions.’

In ‘Glimpses in the Twilight,’ by the Rev. Fred. Lee, D.D., 1885, pp. 370-372, there is a very remarkable account of the rope-trick, so far as the cords being thrown up into the air, and the operator *spinning* up it and disappearing.

Ovington, in his ‘Voyage to Surat in the year 1689,’ p. 258, has the following :—

‘Among the men, whose employment it is to divert spectators with amazing shows and sights, some, they say, will take in their hands a clew of thread, and throw it upward in the air till it all unravels, and they, climbing up themselves by this tender thread to the top of it, presently fall down piecemeal upon the ground, and when all is dropt, unite again the parted members.’

The *Weekly Dispatch* of September 15, 1889, under the heading ‘An Indian Juggling Story,’ begins :

‘There would appear’ (says the *Times of India*) ‘to be a fine field of unworked romance in the annals of Indian jugglery.

One Siddeshur Mitter, writing to the Calcutta paper, gives a thrilling account of a conjurer's feat which he witnessed recently in one of the villages of the Hooghly district. This is a repetition of the rope-trick, except that a long bamboo is substituted for the rope, and the boy who ascends disappears at the top of the bamboo.'

I have had some search made in the preceding numbers of the *Times of India*, but I have not yet succeeded in finding the original statement.

The following is the passage from Ibu Batuto in which he describes the occurrence in India to which he alludes in his account of the rope-trick as seen in China; after some passages about witches and the application of the water ordeal to them in the Jumna, he goes on :

'One day when I was residing at the Court at Delhi, the Sultan sent for me. I went to his presence and found him in his cabinet having with him several of his familiar associates and two of those Jogis. These people wrap themselves in mantles and cover their heads, because they are in the habit of removing the hair of their heads with ashes, as other people do to remove the hair from their armpits. The Sultan desired me to sit down, and when I had done so he said to these two Jogis: "This foreigner comes from a far country; show him something, such as he has never witnessed before." "Very good," said they, and then one of them squatted down; then he rose from the ground, in so much that he remained in the air above us in the position of a man squatting. I was astonished and seized with fear, and I fell in a swoon. The Sultan ordered them to give me a potion which he kept ready; I came to myself and sat down again. The man was still in the same position. His comrade took from a bag which he carried a sandal with which he struck the ground, like a man in a rage. The sandal then rose till it was over the neck of the fellow squatted in the air, and then began to hit him on the neck, whilst he came down gradually till finally he was again seated beside us. The Sultan said to me, "The man squatting is the disciple of the owner of the sandal;" then adding, "I am afraid for your reason or I would make them do still more extraordinary things than you have seen."

'So I departed, but I was seized with palpitation of the heart and became ill. The Sultan, however, made them give me a draught which cured me.' 'French Mission,' IV. pp. 38, 39.

*The 'Donna.'*

THE EDITOR begs to acknowledge the receipt of the following contributions. Sums received after May 10 will be entered in the July number:—

Blackbird 2s. 6d. Mrs. Kelsey (Night Refuge) 10s. Ensham 4s. Leila Gregory (Night Refuge) 15s. L. R. Erskine 2l. 6s. Mrs. Prince 1l. Per Editor of the *Pall Mall Budget* 1l. 5s. 5d.: viz. Anon., Findynate, Perthshire, 2s. 6d.; servants at Findynate, Perthshire, 12s.; G. Appleton 2s. 11d.; H. G. Aldrick 3s.; Miss Crosfield 5s.; box of magazines, J. Waters, Tunbridge Wells. The Sisters have received 2s. 6d. from J. B. for the Night Refuge and some scarves from K. G.

Miss Trench, Pulham St. Mary, Sec. of 'Donna' Knitting Society, acknowledges with many thanks 13 mufflers sent since April 9 (three of them from Anon., near Dundee), and a parcel of old clothes from 'a reader of LONGMAN.'

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NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

*The Editor requests that his correspondents will be good enough to write to him informing him of the subject of any article they wish to offer, before sending the MS. A stamped and addressed envelope should accompany the MS. if the writer wishes it to be returned in case of non-acceptance. The Editor can in no case hold himself responsible for accidental loss. All communications should be addressed to*

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